Nameless Immortals

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NAMELESS IMMORTALS.

BY

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Dedication.

To the Many Humble and Obscure Servants
in Christ's Vineyard,
whose names, though here unknown,
are written in the Lamb's book of life;
whose labors, though here unnoticed,
shall be crowned in heaven—
This Little Book
Is Most Affectionately Dedicated
by the Author.

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THE NAMELESS IMMORTALS.

INTRODUCTION.

" Something beyond! Ah, if it were not so,
Darker would be thy face, O brief to-day,
Earthward we'd bow beneath life's smiting woe,
Powerless to pray.

" Something beyond! The immortal morning stands
Above the night; clear shines her precious brow;
The pendulous star in her transfigured hands
Brightens the Now."

—Mary Clemmer.

Numerous volumes have been written about the great men in Bible history. There are a few illustrious characters around which all else centers. They were the successful leaders of their times. They were the men selected by God and appointed for special works and occasions. They are the epoch-making men of their times. Some of them were brilliant successes in their great missions, while others were signal failures. We are too apt to think

that these prominent characters were the only great men in those times.

Abraham was the father of the faithful, but he was not the only one of true, heroic faith. So Joshua, Joseph and a host of others have taught us the secret of true success. Saul, Absalom, Judas and many others demonstrate the negative side of the problem. The successes and the failures are necessary to make the book a complete guide for man. Not only the precepts of the inspired volume, but the lives and characters it delineates as well, give us infallible rules of faith and practices. It not only gives the rules and laws of life, but it affords us beautiful illustrations of the application of these rules in leading to the highest degrees of success, and the most signal failures as the result of not observing the divine law of life. Far-famed heroes and disgraceful failures, towering monuments and shattered wrecks are seen all along the line of human history—sacred and profane.

In the same great record, covering so many centuries of human history, not a few illus-

trious women appear on the stage, whose names will go down through all time. Some of them are made immortal by military and civil achievements. Others live forever as the mothers of illustrious men. While those that shine with a softer and sweeter light are seen ministering in various ways to the blessed Christ during his mission on earth. In the private home, in the social circle, at the cross and at the tomb they are seen, reflecting, as it were, the glorious rays of the Son of Righteousness. Sarah and Rebecca, Ruth and Esther, the Marys and many other names are sacred wherever the Gospel of Christ is known. And Christian literature has brought these names into the mouths of the reading world.

But, strange as it may seem, many of the richest and most important object lessons given by Christ were given through the instrumentalities of women whose names never appear in history. No class of persons is more important or figures more beautifully in the life of Christ on earth than these nameless women. The names are not given as if it

were the purpose of the great Teacher to emphasize the action rather than the person in the scene. All attention is centered on what is being done and how, while it is only a nameless woman that is doing it. Nameless here forever, yet their works make integral parts of the great work of Christ, and of the gospel of all ages. How often the work is estimated entirely by the size of the author's name. If his reputation is very great, anything that he may do—however insignificant—is as great as his reputation. Thus the world is continually imposed upon. The true character and magnitude of an action can be correctly estimated only when the actor or author is nameless. This seems to have been the idea of Christ in bringing so many nameless characters into his life-work.

These nameless women appear only once each as the great scene moves on. And they appear only for a few moments, and then pass away never to return. But these brief interviews—these crossings of Christ's path by

these characters, become rich mines of most precious truth.

We shall be most amply rewarded by making a special study of these nameless women. They present to us a gallery of wonderful and varied pictures. Here we see living incarnations of human depravity in its vilest form; examples of remarkable, triumphant faith; illustrations of sublime humility and submission; occasions for manifestations of divine grace in its purest form; the bringing together of the most depraved specimens of fallen human nature and the immaculate Son of God, as if to make a test case of the saving power of the world's Redeemer. Hated by the Pharisees and spewed out of society, their contact with Christ was the more conspicuous, and the lessons more illustrious. Some of them may have been left nameless because their very names were an offense in their community, but at the same time they are just the characters needed for the occasion to show forth the power of Christ in the rescue of sin-burdened souls, and to demonstrate Christ's method of dealing with

the fallen and lost. Christ's methods are nowhere so well illustrated as in his dealings with these persons, and nothing is more important to soul-winners than a careful study and a clear, practical understanding of how Christ dealt with individuals, both men and women.

This is a most important part of the practical training school through which Christ led the Apostles for three years, and through them has given it to the church in all time. Christ not only taught and expounded the law, and performed all manner of miracles, but, as his chief mission was to seek and save sinners, he gave special practical instruction how to seek and win souls, and how to deal with the poor, the distressed and the fallen. Happy is the Christian worker who makes Christ his model, and is able to apply his methods. But this requires careful study and close observation of every case in the life of Christ.

The nameless characters reviewed in this little volume are so wisely selected and so dexterously and uniquely dealt with that they give

us a many-sided view of human nature and of Christ's dealings with sinners and saints. Not all of these nameless ones are from the lowest stratum of human depravity, nor are all from the very poor class. They probably come from all classes, so that all are represented in Christ's dealings with them. There is a remarkable variety of character, and of social and moral conditions, and of physical ailments here represented. The wretchedly poor and helpless widow in a variety of aspects; the sinburdened outcasts in all of their shame and dejection; the unfortunate physically deformed; the chronic invalid; and the shameless polyandrist; all are here seen in contact with Christ; and the results of his magic, divine touch are made manifest. Hence to learn many of the most important life lessons taught by him while he was going about among the people, we must carefully study the very short appearances of these nameless characters as they pass before us. They pass but once, and they remain for only a moment. But for this passing moment all the light of the vitascope is

centered on them; they are the prominent figures, and we should study with the utmost care every part of the moving scene—every word, every action—for they are life lessons for us.

All of Christ's miracles are not only facts in themselves, they are not only works of mercy and actual redemption, they are not only proofs and seals of the divinity and divine mission of Christ, but they are living and visible illustrations—or demonstrations—of how Christ works in the spiritual realm, in the real saving of souls from death. Every one of these great works shows just how the work is done, and how he uses human instrumentalities to accomplish his divine purposes; how Christ arranged circumstances, and the affairs, and even the afflictions, of individuals so as to fit them into his divine plans.

When Christ raised Lazarus from the dead it was not only a stupendous miracle in itself; it was not only the raising of a dead body to life; it was an actual demonstration of the meaning of the great doctrine he had just

stated to Martha, that not only shall the dead rise out of their graves, but that all who believe on him shall never die. It illustrated the spiritual resurrection, the regeneration of the soul. This last statement is the greatest and most glorious truth he ever uttered—eternal life through faith in Christ. There can be no death to the believer. To demonstrate his meaning, Christ raised Lazarus from the dead. And in the process of the miracle he demonstrates how he uses human agencies in accomplishing the great work of raising dead souls to life. "Take ye away the stone," said he, when he came to the grave. In his dealings with these unknown women, whether it be miracle working, or the demonstration of ideal character by parables, or the presenting of the plain teachings of the Gospel—in all he brings out the very essence of truth as applied in the salvation of souls and the development of believers. He displays the richest gems of spiritual knowledge. These incidents fairly bristle with fine points and glitter with jewels of thought. No two present the case in precisely

the same way. Each one brings out something new. Hence we must study all of them carefully as so many carefully selected specimens, so that we may gain the total concept of the grand ideal. And as we sit at his feet to learn from these nameless ones, let us come in the spirit of humility that characterized the most illustrious of them, and secured for them such glorious results, that we, too, may receive the full measure of the divine benediction.

But the entire physical and spiritual make-up of woman has an important bearing on the study of these nameless characters. They must needs be women in order to meet precisely the purpose of Christ in giving these demonstrations. Men would not have answered Christ's purpose so well. They do not furnish the specimens he desires to exhibit, and which it is necessary to have in his work. While there is no essential difference between the man and the woman in their general make-up—they are fashioned alike as to their souls and bodies—there is, however, a difference of temperament

and texture that affects, in some degree, the moral and religious nature of woman. And while religion—godliness—is precisely the same in its essence in all persons, it varies in its outward effects and produces, at least slightly, different experiences.

1. The spiritual make-up of woman is of finer material than that of man. Not different in any sense, only of finer texture and differently tempered. They are both constructed after the same model. They both have the same soul faculties and powers. But as the texture of steel differs and may be differently tempered, and so is capable of being made into a finer-edged tool, so is woman as compared with man. The difference is rather one of degree than of structure and essence. The soul-powers that are prominent in religion predominate to a greater degree in woman than the man. Notably, the emotional powers, as also trust, confidence, humility, fear, and the aesthetic taste. This is not a matter of cultivation in woman, but it is the natural make-up of her soul. Hence this quality in woman

makes her naturally more susceptible to the Christian religion—it is more natural to her than to the man. The same sentiments that predominate in Christianity also predominate in woman.

This being true, it is easily seen how woman can be the best or the worst being on earth. These finer qualities and soul-powers quickened and cleansed by divine grace may yield the highest ideal of refined humanity. The beautiful and the good may reach their climax in this life in a thoroughly Christian woman. Not that she excels in motive or character or genuineness of faith and love, but only in degree. She has less to overcome in reaching the higher degrees of religious experience than man. But while she may be the best, she may also be the worst. These finer qualities devoted to the service of sin take her to the opposite extreme. When her light becomes darkness, how great is that darkness. When her love becomes hatred it is of the most cruel sort. When her faith becomes infidelity it is of the worst form—nothing is so unbecoming

and so unnatural as an infidel woman. That woman, who is the mother of the incarnate Son of God, should become an unbeliever appears most unreasonable. That woman, for whom Christianity has done so much, should close her heart against the Savior of the world seems most inexcusable. When the beauty and aesthetic taste of woman are given over to the service of sin, how low she may fall in degradation and vice. The totally depraved woman is doubtless the worst character the earth ever supports. And when her powers are refined by divine grace and given to the service of Christ, she is indeed the most noble being on earth. These natural endowments of woman make it possible that the most illustrious examples may be found in the dealings of Christ with women. His power to save, his grace and his pardoning love, are best displayed and tested when brought in contact with extreme cases of depravity and sin. And we may expect to see some of the finest specimens of his work when he takes in hand an utterly hopeless case, rejected by the world, and steeped in the vilest

sin. The best specimen of such a character is found only in the person of a woman, who, with all her powers and passions, has been enslaved to the lowest forms of vice.

2. Woman's physical constitution, as well as her relation to the other sex and to the public, makes her more helpless, and more dependent, than man. God has so made it. The interdependence of man and woman is really the basis of all domestic as well as social happiness. Neither can be independent of the other. To make them so is to violate the fundamental principles of all that is good. It is not good for man to be alone, and the very creation of the woman shows that she is only a part of the man. But as she is, in a sense,—not to her disparagement in the least—the weaker vessel, so is she the more dependent of the two. She is the weaker vessel only as the translucent chinaware is weaker than the coarser, heavier earthenware. The emancipation of woman from slavery and the bondage of sin through the gospel is the greatest work that can ever be accomplished on earth. To reinstate her into

equality with man that she may fulfill the purpose of her creation, is to bestow upon her the greatest of all temporal blessings. But the modern idea of the independence of woman—that she is to be her own bread-winner and provider—that she is to take the place of the man in wage-earning and in business affairs, is to re-enslave her, and to rob her of all the refining and ennobling influences that God designed that she should wield over man. This self-imposed thraldom on the part of thousands of women has unfitted them forever for the higher duties and enjoyments of life. These women seek to free themselves from dependence upon men, but in the attempt they only make themselves utterly dependent—not upon men whom they might love and with whom they might live in peace and comfort—but they make themselves dependent upon humanity in its worst and most oppressive form. They step down from the heaven-ordained equality with men in the highest and purest sense, and make themselves tools and slaves of men by trying to be a man and to do men's work.

Women can never take man's place without degrading herself. The true sphere of woman is the highest sphere on earth. God has fashioned her body and her soul for that sphere—a sphere which man cannot fill, and a sphere which woman cannot leave without degrading herself in body and in soul.

But this natural dependence and helplessness on the part of woman only makes her a better illustration of the application of saving grace. In some of the cases under consideration it was the feeling of helpless dependence that gained the victory. What power there is in weakness. It is woman's dependence upon man that wields the power over him. It is the dependent, the hungry, the thirsty that Christ calls to him and blesses, not those who feel their self-sufficiency and independence. This characteristic of woman illustrates most beautifully and precisely the attitude every soul must have towards God before he can bless and save. God instantly resists all pride and self-sufficiency on the part of man. There is nothing so becoming to man as true humility and a

sense of dependence when he comes into the presence of God. Woman's natural relation to man not only illustrates this principle, but it makes it easier and more natural for her to come to Christ in the true attitude and spirit.

3. The social nature and relations of woman are other peculiarities that must be considered in studying Christ's dealings with her. In society woman is usually the highest or the lowest; the best protected or most defenseless. Man can sometimes afford to stoop, but woman never. A man may marry beneath himself and raise his wife to his own level. But when a woman marries beneath herself she descends to the level of her husband. Frederick the Great married a poor peasant girl and raised her to his throne. Many of our young ladies are willing to sacrifice their millions in order to marry those by whom they may be elevated to royalty. A woman's social standing usually measures her influence—her power with others. Social position is superior to all else.

Hence it appears that woman's social position very easily affects her relation to Christ.

By the woman in the higher circles of society, the religion of Christ is in danger of being considered beneath her on account of the humility that enters into it as an essential element, while, at the same time, it may recommend itself to her as a desirable ornament to her already highly adorned character. On the other hand the woman in the humble walks of life meets difficulties of an opposite nature. She must face the masses who think her position too humble to allow her equal rights in God's house, while the notoriously sinful are rejected by the Pharisaic spirit in society as being entirely unworthy of even touching the Savior's feet. So the lower classes of women must literally push their way through in order to obtain the desired blessing, while the elite consider it almost beneath their dignity and social standing to seek that which is free to all classes.

It is interesting to see how Christ deals with these different classes. The very humble, the extremely poor, the unfortunate invalid, the notoriously sinful, and the nondescript foreign

stranger, all are the subjects of his treatment, and in a variety of circumstances. Both the Savior and the saved are to be carefully observed. Sometimes he is the chief actor in the scene. Sometimes the subject he is treating is the prominent character in the action. And again both the Healer and the patient are equally conspicuous. With this variety of scenes and peculiar make-up of characters and the supreme, twofold purpose of Christ through it all—to save and to teach others how to save —we may expect a rich feast in studying these nameless women as they come in contact with him, whose mission was not to condemn, but to seek and to save the lost.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL; OR THE UNEXPECTED MEETING.

"In some wild Eastern legend the story has been told,
Of a fair and wonderous fountain that flowed in times of old;
Cold and crystalline its waters, brightly glancing in the ray
Of the summer moon at midnight, or the sun at height of day.

"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to this fountain side!
Drink freely of its waters, drink and be satisfied!
Yet linger not, but hasten on, and bear to all around
Glad tidings of the love and peace and mercy thou hast found."

—Anon.

The whole of life's journey for each one of us is made up of little else than remarkable circumstances and strange, unexpected meetings and crossings of our paths. With some our paths cross and recross every day. They are inseparably interwoven and correlated. Side by side and hither and thither we move as

onward we hurry through life. Others' paths we cross less frequently; in the business of life, in the social circle, or on the great highway we meet for a moment, we exchange a word or a sign and pass on. A much larger number of people we meet but once in life, one crossing of our paths, one short interview or mere glance of the eye, and we pass on to meet no more. But with the great mass of humanity we meet not at all, not in time and perhaps not in eternity. Strange meetings on life's journey, remarkable circumstances in our lives.

Often these meetings mean nothing so far as we can now see. We have gained nothing and we have given nothing. This, however, depends largely upon our own individuality. We may go through this world with our eyes closed, never seeing any thing nor any body; never shedding a ray of sunlight, nor dropping a friendly word; never scattering seeds of kindness for other passers-by. But these interweavings of life-paths are not all accidental. There is an Eye that guides our feet, a Hand

that regulates these crossings and recrossings so as to work out his wise purpose and make the most of our little lives. The greatest opportunities often come to us at these intersections of our paths, the supreme moment of a lifetime is sometimes reached when our narrow experience crosses another or flows into it.

How interesting and instructive it is to study our own lives in their strange make-up, and the wise purpose of God in them. Here I meet a stranger and form a new acquaintance, a new tie from which I am never released, though I may never see him again. By this touch some new idea of life is gained that becomes an integral part of my experience and of the make-up of my life. A thought was dropped into my soul that may become the most valuable and fruitful in my whole life. I have had an opportunity to give as well as to receive. I may leave a lasting impression on a receptive mind. I may go down through life in the memory of that person as a benefactor, or he may cherish in his heart a regret that I was ever seen. Here again I see the face of an old

friend. Numerous past events crowd into my memory. Kind greetings and words of encouragement are exchanged, and I go on my way stronger and happier than before. Some burden has been dropped, hopes are brightened and courage renewed. I have gained much and I have had an opportunity to throw a ray of light athwart the path of one who is struggling in the great battle of life.

But all may not be friends that we cross in our way. There are those who not only impart no good to others, nor unobservingly pass by, but like a luring siren they seek to lead astray, or like a hungry lion they are seeking whom they may devour. But even these may prove a boon to me. I am made more cautious, I am led to examine more carefully my strength, and so direct my way that I may avoid alluring temptations, and be better able to resist the powers of sin. In Christ's life among men one purpose alone was supreme—to do good. He went about fulfilling this great mission. It seems to have been the aim of his life to make his path so cross all others that he might ac-

complish the greatest amount of good to those with whom he came in contact. It is in these apparently accidental meetings that his purpose is demonstrated—that the most beautiful specimens of his great work are seen. We see him nowhere so much a Savior, a real friend to fallen man, as when he stoops to confer blessings upon those whom he met but once, and who were considered most obscure and undeserving.

His meeting with the woman at Jacob's well is one of the most interesting and instructive incidents in his whole life. It was an occasion of a lifetime—an opportunity that must be improved just then, not only for the woman herself and her immediate relatives, but as an essential and integral part of his great work. It is one of the richest and sweetest morsels in his blessed gospel—a pure nugget from the mine.

For some months Christ had been laboring in Judea. It was his first Judean ministry. He had gone there immediately after the marriage in Cana of Galilee where he had turned the water into wine. This marriage

had taken place some time in April, probably early in that month, and immediately thereafter he began his first public work in Jerusalem. This campaign in Judea was short, for now early in July he is returning to Galilee, and it was on this journey that he passed through Samaria and met this woman at the well. While his first work in Judea was of short duration, it was by no means uneventful. It was during this time that occurred:

1. The first cleansing of the temple, by which act Christ first openly asserted his authority, and condemned the corrupt practices of the Jews. It was at this time that he made the scourge of small cords and lashed the offenders out of the house of God. This was apparently a very presumptuous act when we remember that Christ was almost entirely unknown at that time, and was at the very beginning of his public ministry.

2. It was during his first stay in Jerusalem that Nicodemus came to Christ by night, and that remarkable conversation took place in which Christ formally states the great doc-

trine of the new birth, and the atonement, as recorded in the third chapter of St. John. This Nicodemus was ever afterwards a faithful disciple of Christ and defended him.

3. Numerous miracles were wrought by Christ during this time, for it was through the effect of these miracles that Nicodemus came to Christ for information. There is, however, no record of any of these miracles given by St. John—nor possibly by the other Gospels.

4. While Christ was in Jerusalem this first time, John the Baptist was continuing his work in Enon beyond Jordan. But he was arrested about the first of July and cast into prison at Machaerus. This was done to gratify the revengeful Herodias, whose unlawful marriage with Herod John had condemned. In the meantime the success of Christ's preaching was arousing the jealousy of the Pharisees, which, probably, cut short his work in Jerusalem at this time, and he quietly withdrew towards Galilee.

Just when the little band left Jerusalem we are not told. It is, however, quite certain

that they arrived at the noted well about noon, the sixth hour of the day. It is hardly probable that they had come all the way from Jerusalem that forenoon. The distance was too great for a half-day's journey on foot. The record shows, however, that they had walked a long distance, for Christ was weary and they were all hungry. It had been a long and tiresome and, very probably, a dry and hot tramp. They doubtless eagerly pressed on so they might rest and refresh themselves at this famous watering place so full of sacred history, and so near one of the most ancient and noted cities of the Holy Land. Here was Abraham's first vision of God after he had left Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia. Here was the home of Jacob after he had returned from his sojourn in Padan-Aram. Here the boy Joseph was so shamefully treated by his brothers when he was sent to them by his fond father, and sold by them and taken to Egypt. Here was one of the cities of refuge in the early history of Israel. Here the brave Joshua made his farewell address to the assembled tribes of

Israel after the land had been divided and largely subdued under him. Here were buried all the Patriarchs and the bones of Joseph brought from Egypt. Here occurred numerous other important events in the history of the kings.

And here now the incarnate Son of God—the long expected Hope of Israel—sits on the well, the poor, weary Son of Man. And of all the events that had made this place so sacred, none is as important as this. This simple incident will perpetuate the history of this place as long as the name of Christ remains sacred to humanity.

The Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob is another one of those nameless women immortalized by coming in contact with Christ. No name is on record, only the incident and the words remain. And nowhere, even in the teachings of Christ, were words uttered more pregnant with living thought, and more expressive of divine wisdom and love. Was this casual meeting of Christ with this woman a mere accident, or was it one of those beauti-

fully arranged affairs in Christ's life to make an opportunity to accomplish a grand purpose? Was it, like the death of Lazarus, brought about for the glory of God, and the advancement of the divine kingdom? Was it all an accident that this sinful woman and the thirsty Christ should meet at the well all alone in order to give the occasion for this interview? Many things that appear accidental on the human side, are most skillfully manipulated by an unseen hand so as to work out the great games of life according to the divine will, and at the same time not interfere with the free agency of man. In the circumstance under consideration, Christ's being thirsty was the immediate condition that led to the conversation. His asking for a drink of water was the introduction.

Be these things as they may, a careful study of the situation reveals to us the most consummate wisdom and skill in Christ's dealings with this strange and godless woman. There is here a rich mine of good instruction for all, both saint and sinner, and especially

for workers in God's great harvest field. The soul-winner may here sit at the feet of the great Master and learn the secret of reaching the heart—the heart of the most wayward and ungodly. There is an avenue to every one's heart. To find that secret way is the problem to be solved in each case. All are different, and precisely the same method will not apply to every one; there are, however, general principles that have universal application. Christ's management of this woman is exceedingly beautiful, and is not only a success in itself, but it is a model object lesson, as if Christ did this for no other purpose than to teach others how to do similar work successfully.

Notice some of the nice points in this wonderful incident:

1. Christ's simple request for a drink of water from this strange woman was the first step towards accomplishing his divine purpose. However simple and natural the request may have been, it was no less a skillful and wise stroke of policy on his part.

This request at once removed all possible

suspicion from the mind of the woman. Although Christ was a perfect stranger and a Jew, and she recognized him as such, it was still the most natural and reasonable request that could be made. That a weary footman should ask for a drink of cool water at high noon on a hot day in July is just what might be expected at a well where there was no public means of drawing water. And this request could not reasonably be refused, even by a Samaritan to a Jew. This request manifested a degree of confidence on the part of Christ that would tend to remove fear and suspicion from the woman's mind.

By accepting the refreshing draught lifted by the woman from the deep well, Christ places himself under a degree of obligation to her. She has become his benefactor by his own request, and she is thereby brought into a position where she is more likely to hear him favorably. In this we see another stroke of policy on the part of Christ, a turn full of the nicest tact and well applied. There is a large class of sinners that can be best and, possibly, only,

reached by this simple device. It reveals a certain degree of confidence in the woman on the part of Christ, and a degree of familiarity that tends to remove natural timidity and stiffness. This done, and some of the greatest difficulties in reaching the sinner's heart are removed.

There is in this request an element of aggressiveness on the part of the soul-winner. The woman had been silent, and, doubtless, would have remained so. There had not even been the courteous exchange of greetings, nor the least sign of recognition, the two peoples having no dealings with one another. Had not Christ asked for a drink of water there would probably not a word have passed between them. Christ was the aggressive party. He was the first to speak.

And Christ said just the right thing at the right time. Had he given only the ordinary greeting—which was the thing we would naturally expect—it might have remained unanswered, and it would certainly not have led so naturally to the prolonged conversation on

religion, as did the request for a drink. But he asked for the thing the woman did not expect. She was surprised at his request, and this emboldened her to inquire into the very unusual breach. Christ had simply ignored the prejudice existing between the Jews and Samaritans and asked for a drink of water, without making any apology or explanation. That Christ should ask this favor of the woman was such a surprise to her that she could not remain silent. It is well to surprise sinners and enemies sometimes by what they least expect, and this may often be done most effectively by asking a favor. It may be somewhat humiliating on our part, but by the wise soul-winner it may be done as a stroke of policy, and if wisely applied may be most effective.

There is in this approach to the woman, marked prudence and wisdom. Christ did not first speak of religion and sin, and thus intimidate or prejudice her, but while he is in the act of receiving the refreshing drink from her hand he speaks of the Living Water to which he desires to lead her. How naturally the way

to the spiritual lies through the temporal. How frequently does Christ illustrate this by his teachings and miracles. Happy is the soul-winner that is wise and skillful enough to work through the one to the other.

Once more. We see here an element of humility and condescension on the part of Christ. He who measures the seas in the hollow of his hand and binds up the waters in the thick clouds, humbly asks for a drink of water from the hand of one of his vilest creatures. And all this that he might open her heart in a natural and easy manner to receive the Water of Life from him, and at the same time teach others how to lead perishing souls to the fountain of Life.

2. The woman's very natural answer to the request of Christ was another step towards the desired goal. To her expression of surprise he kindly answered that if she had asked of him, he would have given her Living Water—much more than he has asked of her, and much more than she was even able to give to him. The conversation that followed leads rapidly to the

end sought by Christ. We note the following points:

Christ aims to create in the woman a desire or thirst for the Living Water of which he had spoken. They who drink it, says he, shall never thirst, but shall have within them a well of living water. This representation of the Living Water would most naturally create a desire for it as being the one thing she needed. Give her this water and she would not have to go to the well ever and anon. This Living Water struck her as just the thing she needed. She very soon expressed a desire for such a boon. Christ should ever be presented as the Water of Life to the thirsty soul, the desire of all nations. We should ever aim to create in the heart of the poor lost one a desire for salvation—a thirst for the Living Water.

Christ himself, and he alone, gives this Living Water. However crude and vague may have been the ideas of the woman concerning this great gift, Christ impressed her with the fact that he—and he alone—can give it. The world to-day needs to be convinced of this

great truth, that Christ alone can save. Christ and him crucified must be the theme of the preaching that saves souls.

This Living Water is given for the asking alone. This brings it at once within the reach of the woman, as it does for all who hear the gospel message. This makes the obtaining of this most desirable of all blessings the easiest of all things. How the blessed Christ constantly emphasizes this element of the gospel—"Ask and ye shall receive."

The asking is the result of knowing. If the woman had known the gift of God and who it was that was talking to her, she would have asked of him. But she knew neither the gift nor the giver. Does she not in this particular represent the great mass of unsaved humanity? Is it not indeed ignorance of this Living Water that causes so many to perish for the want of it? Do our neighbors and friends who have been brought up in a gospel land not really know of this Water nor of Christ, that so many of them are unsaved?

The great Teacher has now revealed the se-

cret of the fountain of life, and how the life-giving draught may be obtained. But other points are to be gained, other conquests are to be made before this work is completed and the great lesson finished. This woman was a sinner, one whose life was an open violation of all that was upright and clean. Just as Christ had led her to feel the desire for the Living Water, so now his policy is to show her the sinfulness of her life, and lead her to the confession of her guilt even before she is aware of it.

He asks her to go and bring her husband. She quickly answers that she has no husband. She does not know that this answer is a confession of her sinful, adulterous life. She did not know that she was standing in the presence of Him whose eye was piercing her inmost soul, and reading her secret thought and character. Christ being a perfect stranger, not only in person, but in nationality as well, she felt sure he could know nothing of her past life, and her present unrighteous mode of living. Did she not rather think for a moment

that she had gained a double victory by his question and her answer? By it she would cover her past life and conceal her present relation with the man with whom she was living, and at the same time convince the Jewish stranger that he was just a little mistaken as to her present relations. We might very easily imagine a slight air of triumph in her ready answer: "I have no husband." But Christ quickly gained his point. The confession she made was all that was needed, however, she did not yet realize the true situation. Her answer was intended to convey the impression that she was living an upright life, either as a maiden or a widow. But Christ's answer to her prompt confession is sublimely skillful and well aimed. The moment has come for him to complete his work. There are in his answer three distinct points:

1. There was a confirmation of what the woman had said, and no doubt a momentary comfort to her, thinking that he had accepted her reply as true, and that he was in a measure complimentary. There was something stimu-

lating in the vigorous expression, "Thou hast well said," had the divine Speaker stopped with that.

2. But this is only the strong bow in his hand with which he is about to drive the arrow of conviction into the heart of the sinful woman before him. It is well that you said that, said he, "for"—what a point there is in this little word just here—"for thou hast had five husbands." How it must have astonished her to have her past life unveiled by an utter stranger. How could he know these things? But imagine her surprise when this stranger revealed a perfect knowledge of her present mode of life. So her evasive answer turns out to be only a plain confession of her sinful life. What consummate skill is here used by Christ. He does not at once and openly accuse her of sin, but he adroitly leads her to an open confession by the very words she had used to conceal the truth. What she had said was certainly true, but it was not the whole truth. How often is it true that those who are not Christians condemn themselves by the very

words they use to justify and excuse themselves.

3. This turn had thrown a flood of light on Christ himself. The woman now sees in him more than an ordinary Jew. This clear insight into her past life and present character has convinced her that she is talking with a prophet. She did not deny the accusation nor shrink from the truth, but tacitly confessed it all by candidly admitting that she "perceived him to be a prophet." But how adroitly she changes the subject of the conversation, and she shows herself to be neither a fool nor an ignoramus concerning the teachings of the Scriptures and the coming of the Messias. This remarkable interview ends with the climactic assertion by Christ that he himself who was at that moment talking to her was the expected Messias—not only a prophet, as she had already concluded, but the very Christ in whose future advent she had expressed a belief.

CHAPTER II.

THE KISS OF TRUE LOVE.

"To the hall of the feast came the sinful and fair;
She heard in the city that Jesus was there.
She marked not the splendor that blazed on their board,
But silently knelt at the feet of her Lord.

"The hair from her forehead, so sad and so meek,
Hung dark o'er the blushes that burned on her cheek;
And so still and so lowly she bent in her shame,
It seemed as her spirit had flown from its frame."

—J. J. Callaman.

The great Teacher had all day been surrounded by a crowd of listeners, some to catch up the words of life as they fell from his lips, and eagerly feed upon them as the real Bread of heaven. Some followed through mere curiosity because there was a crowd and something new was constantly expected—even the expectation of novelty will always draw a crowd of a certain class of people. Others came to criticise, and, if possible, find

some objection or accusation against Christ. Perhaps the same elements are to be found in every representative assembly to-day, whether at church or elsewhere—there is always present the anxious hearer, and the devourer of sensational foam, and the critic.

The most important event of the day thus far was the coming of a commission to Christ from John the Baptist, who was at this time in prison through the jealousy of the wicked Herodias. His work was stopped, or, rather, it was ended, and he was only awaiting his execution. To reassure himself and his disciples under these trying persecutions he sent a commission to ask Christ if he was indeed the Christ, or was another to be expected. Whether there was any real doubt in John's mind is not stated; it may have been for the sake of others that he sent. The occasion, however, gave an opportunity for Christ to speak of John, to place him in a true light before the people and before the world. Christ's teaching concerning John is most remarkable. He places him in advance of the front rank of all

the great prophets. He was a prophet, and yet more than a prophet. Of all those born of woman John was the greatest. Christ's answer to the commission from John was unique. At the same time, even while the delegates were present, many were healed of various ailments and afflictions, and even the dead were raised —perhaps some one just at this time. These miracles constituted the answer of Christ to John. What this commission saw was far more convincing and conclusive than anything Christ could say to them. From these things John must draw his own conclusions as to whether this wonder-worker is indeed the Christ.

How like this is Christ's answer to the world to-day. He has left to us an indisputable record of precisely the same work to which he referred John, only we have more than John had. The work of Christ continued more than two years after the death of John. Christ answers all inquirers and doubters to-day by the same argument—his works.

It was now the hour for dinner, whether

noon or evening matters not. Christ was doubtless weary and hungry after this very busy and toilsome day—for preaching and healing and answering all manner of questions was by no means easy physically or mentally. He is invited by a Pharisee to eat at his house. The invitation is immediately and courteously accepted, and they resort to the Pharisee's house. Apparently without any formality, Christ is seated at the table. Not even the ordinary courtesies are shown him. Whether it was the ordinary careless manner of this Pharisee to treat his guests indifferently, or whether it was done as a mark of special disrespect to Christ, does not appear in the record. It is clear, however, that Christ noticed the manner in which he had been received by his host. He manifests no offense, but shows that he has an appreciation for even the formal courtesies that are due him. Should we not carefully remember and observe these things when we go into the Lord's House? And how should we treat Christ as our guest? Christ was a stranger and sojourner on earth. He is still

such. He is our guest in our hearts and in our homes. How do we receive him and treat him? He is our guest here, but we shall be his guest in his Father's house, if we truly receive him here. While it was by invitation that Christ went to the Pharisee's house to eat, it was none the less the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon that house that they should have such a guest. He was poor and homeless, but the Son of God. Christ teaches us that as we treat the poor and the little ones in our homes, so we treat him. These are the helpless ones—and, alas, too often the despised ones—whom the Lord brings to our homes in order to test our love and faithfulness to himself. "He that despiseth the poor reproacheth his own Maker."

The house in which Christ was dining was a well ordered oriental home. The Pharisee was presumably a wealthy man in whose house everything was conducted in the best style. Yet with all this the distinguished guest was not shown ordinary courtesy. The manner was as cold and stiff as the house was elegant, and

the invitation was doubtless as formal as the reception was discourteous. Possibly it was only for controversy that he was invited. The friendly greeting, the cleansing of the dusty, tired feet, and the anointing of the head were all omitted, all of which appeared only doubly inexcusable since Christ was an invited guest. Was it possible that this Pharisee had invited Christ just to show him his own utter hatred of him, and to offer him an insult under his own roof? Had Christ gone there uninvited, his treatment at the hands of the Pharisee would have been less uncivil. But there are those who study how they may show disrespect to Christ. They study his word only to offer insult by distorting and rejecting it, to mutilate it, and to scoff at its teachings. There are those who attend the sanctuary only to make light of the blessed gospel of Christ.

Silence seems to reign as they sit at the table. Apparently there is nothing in common between the host and the guest. The social feature of the dining is at its minimum. The frigid stiffness of the Pharisee has knotted his

throat and paralyzed his tongue. But as the meal progresses the situation is unexpectedly relieved. A strange female figure appears in the dining hall and stealthily approaches Christ from behind. She is bent low, and her long hair, disheveled, partly veils her face, and in her hand she carries a small box. Unexpectedly, as it may seem, did she appear—a sinful woman, evidently a noted character in the community, as we would gather from the unuttered criticisms of the Pharisee. Was she known to him as a sinful character, or did her dress and manner betray her? At any rate the Pharisee did not misjudge her, but he pronounced premature and summary judgment on Christ for permitting her to touch him, and especially to minister to him in the peculiar manner described in the narrative.

The woman is evidently in great mental distress. Her weeping is very profuse, so that she washed his feet with her tears—the feet that had been neglected by the proud and unkind host are washed with the tears of the weeping woman. The inexcusable neglect of the Phari-

see gave the occasion for the remarkable service rendered by her. That which he omitted or even disdained, has immortalized this woman.

Look at the climactic value of the things used by the woman in washing the feet of Christ. Nothing could be added to make her act of the highest and noblest character. The tears—what express the true sentiment of the heart so forcibly and so elegantly as genuine tears, tears that flow from the heart as did these? Real sorrow, real joy and real sympathy flow in tears when words are too feeble to utter or express the heart's fulness. Tears are spoken of as being so precious that they are bottled by the indulgent heavenly Father. But here this woman uses them for the lowest and most humble menial service, to wash the feet of Jesus—the hair, the pride and beauty of woman, is used for a towel with which to dry and cleanse the moistened feet. Then the kiss. The use of the tears and the hair was not enough to express the throbbing affection of the woman's heart—the use of these might

be looked upon as a matter of necessity. But the kiss for the feet, not once only, but repeatedly as she is washing and anointing them, is the expression of supreme feeling.

See how this woman surmounts difficulties in accomplishing her purpose. The whole situation was decidedly embarrassing to her. It may have seemed hardly proper for her to come in as she did, uninvited to render this unique service to a stranger. Is it possible that she was lingering near when Christ came to the house and noticed that he had received no attention from the Pharisee, and this neglect on his part suggested her course of action, and afforded an opportunity to express her love as contrasted with the frigidity of the host? She desired to wash Christ's feet but there was no water available nor any other of the necessary things thereto. But this difficulty only opens the way for a better manifestation of greater love. If she indeed desired to thus honor Christ, if she was genuinely sincere and humble in her purpose, the lack of water and towel will not stand long

in her way. Her tears and her hair shall serve a new purpose, not only in the foot-bath, but also to show that nothing is too sacred for the Master's use. The ointment she has purchased is not worthy to be poured on his head, nor would she presume to perform so honorable a work, but unseemly as it may appear, the ointment is applied to the feet, nor were her lips worthy to touch him, save upon his feet. Who had ever thought of expressing his love in such a manner as this? Only a woman—and shall we say only a woman impressed with the deepest sense of sin could do what this woman did! The feet of the blessed Son of God bear not only the prints of the nails that held him to the cross —the mark of cruel hatred—but they bear also the print of the lips of this sinful woman—the mark of all-sacrificing love—the imprint of kisses that cannot be erased. Christ will bear forever the marks of cruelty and of love. His feet, his hands, his side and his thorn-scarred brow tell his love for us; the marks of the kiss on his feet tell the love of a conscious

sinner for Christ. Perhaps no kiss ever meant just what and just as much as did this one. There are many kinds of kisses with as many meanings.

There is first, the kiss of lovers, an effusion of emotion that can be expressed in no other manner so well. When the whole heart goes out through the lips, and the electric touch tingles every nerve, and the two souls are welded into one by the power of that unique relation between two beings of different sexes. This kiss is something that may be affected but never counterfeited. This was the first kiss ever bestowed when the man in his primeval purity first met his counterpart in the original paradise and recognized her as his God-provided bride, adorned in her celestial bridal robe deftly woven by angel fingers. There the lovers' kiss was the seal of the marriage, where God himself officiated, and angels were the witnesses.

There is the kiss of family affection, where souls of kindred blood bound by natural and inseparable ties express their love by the oft

repeated kiss. There is here not the electric spark of the lover, but the fervent beat of loving kindred hearts. Is not this the lovers' kiss matured through wedded and parental affection into its strongest and holiest possibilities in the family? The lovers' kiss is the expression of a new-born affection in the soul. The kiss of family affection is the expression of an inborn characteristic of the soul. The lovers' kiss is the first blooming of an emotion, the family kiss is the perennial fruit of the union of kindred souls.

There is, next, the kiss of friendship. A peculiar privilege claimed by certain individuals who are in an inner circle of friends. This is considered a mark of special friendship, regardless of any relationship, and it is indulged in almost exclusively by the female sex. Custom has doubtless fixed this law. That it is always the index of true friendship, we would not presume to say.

Closely related to the above, is the kiss of formality. Neither love nor friendship is meant by this species of lip service, it may,

however, be a degenerate form of friendship. Of this sort was that practiced so much in olden times and referred to by Christ in speaking to the Pharisee. It was a formal custom for guests to be welcomed with a kiss, especially when the guest was a person of distinction. This had been neglected upon this occasion.

Another kiss, and of special significance is the kiss of forgiveness. This is exemplified most notably in the case of the returning prodigal. This kiss differs from those already described. In those the desire and advance is mutual—love meets love, friend meets friend, equal meets equal. But in this the advance is made by the offended party; it is all an act of pure grace, and it is entirely unexpected by the offender. This kiss is the seal of absolute, unconditional forgiveness. It is an unmerited and unexpected favor bestowed, where the opposite was deserved and expected. It kisses away the bitter tear of sorrow and regret. It reunites severed hearts, welds the broken link, and restores love and confidence

There is also the kiss of betrayal and deceit. It has the external semblance of love and friendship, but it is the very climax of hypocrisy and hate. The lips that bestow this kiss may be as delicate as the rose and as soft as oil, while the heart is as cruel as death. By this kiss the incarnate devil, Judas, designated Christ to the hellish mob that went out to arrest him. It was the last recorded act of the traitor until he remorsefully flung back the purchase money of the blood of the Son of God, and went out and made a desperate plunge into perdition. His last words, "I have betrayed innocent blood"—the betraying kiss that gave his Master over to his enemies, reacted with such vehement force that it hurled his wretched soul into hell. How many are betrayed by this kiss! The young and fair are marked for the destroyer by a deceitful and betraying kiss. Let all who kiss with deceitful lips remember that it was by this seal that Judas marked Christ for the crucifixion.

But, once more, there is the kiss of true love. This is not identical with the kiss of lovers,

nor even of the same species, where lips meet lips in isothermal affection and emotion. But the kiss of true love is of a higher and purer sort than is born of any earthly relation or human tie. It is purely unselfish, and bestows its kiss rather upon the feet of the object of its affection. It is not the expression so much of affection nor emotion, but rather an overflow in the soul of that which Christ makes the sum total of the ten commandments; pure love, of which God is the source, and Christ its sublimest manifestation. This love seeks and delights to honor Christ in any proper form by which it can make itself known. The martyr in the flames, the preacher in the pulpit, the servant ministering a cup of cold water, and this sinful woman kissing the Savior's feet, may all be moved by the same impulse. But nowhere does a kiss express more, or even as much, as in this case. Nowhere is there a more beautiful and humble expression of gratitude.

The kiss was the climactic act in this remarkable and unique performance. All was done with the utmost tenderness. Imagine with

what care this woman rendered this service. But the gentle touch of the hand, the bath with the fast flowing tears, and the wiping with the soft, silken hair were not enough. These acts were not a sufficient preparation for the anointing, nor a satisfactory expression of the secret of the woman's heart. There is no other way by which she may express her humility and love—only by this most expressive of all signs—a woman's true kiss. So she kissed his feet, not once only, but, as Christ indicates, repeatedly. What a trinity here of expression, of heart-overflow on the part of this woman—her tears, her hair, and her kisses imprinted upon the feet. What are these to a woman? Are they not the effusion of her heart, the beauty and pride of her person, and the sweetest and strongest love of her soul, all unsparingly lavished upon the feet of the Christ? There is not in all human history a more beautiful and significant picture than this woman at the feet of Jesus.

But the woman seems to have done all with the utmost indifference as to the surroundings.

She had only one thought. The occasion was her opportunity—the supreme moment had come. Nor did she hasten nervously and carelessly through her service of love. She seemed to revel in it as the sweetest morsel of experience in her hitherto bitter life-work. It must, however, have been a great trial, to say nothing of the apparent impropriety of the transaction. The whole performance was closely watched with critic-squinted eye by the Pharisee, and from his thoughts we would conclude that he knew the woman's character. But his one thought was not to criticise the woman and her conduct, however much he may have disliked it, but to find fault with Christ. So he at once jumped to the conclusion that Christ was not a prophet, for if he were he could read the character of the woman, and, knowing her character, would not allow her to do this. What a common weakness the Pharisee here betrays. His one purpose was to find fault with Christ simply because he hated him. The Pharisee no doubt belonged to a clan who were using all measures fair and un-

fair to find some accusation against Christ. Nothing is so easy as to find fault when we hunt for it. How much of the objection and fault against Christians and the church has its origin not in facts, but in unwillingness to obey and serve Christ.

But while the Pharisee in his heart was condemning Christ, he was not aware that his own thoughts were in full view of his hated guest. Christ does not condemn the Pharisee, nor say anything to indicate the sinfulness of the woman, but in his own inimitable manner he leads the Pharisee to see his own faults and even to condemn himself, and in a measure justify the woman's conduct. The short parable of the two debtors presented to the Pharisee leads him to pronounce judgment. Then Christ makes the personal application in a kind and yet very pungent manner, so the Pharisee is compelled to see the justice of the application. Pointing to the woman, he says to the Pharisee: "I came to your house at your own bidding, but you gave me no water for my feet, no welcome kiss and no oil for my head—

the reception was exceedingly cold and indifferent. But this sinful woman whom you condemn and of whom positively nothing could be expected, has discharged all these duties and courtesies in a most remarkable manner; in such a way as to put you and all others to shame. She has washed my feet with tears, she has wiped them with the hair of her head, she has repeatedly kissed my feet, and anointed them with ointment. She has esteemed it the greatest privilege and honor to do to my feet what you should have done to my head. She delights to do me the lowest menial service in the most loving and even most expensive manner, but you disdain showing me the common courtesy of a guest. The secret of it all is, she loves me, you do not love me." The woman was, no doubt, the greater sinner, but she has also become the greater lover of Christ, not because of her sin, but because of the abundance of her forgiveness, of which the Pharisee knew nothing. Christ gently pronounces the words of absolution and dismisses the woman. The question was not how great a

sinner she had been. But here is proof positive of her love for Christ, and of a true sense of her own unworthiness. Hers was a case of genuine repentance and true love. What a contrast between these two characters, in their social standing, in their worldly circumstances and in their estimation of self, but especially in their estimation of Christ, and in the words addressed to them by him. The first has truly become last, and the last, first. To the one, Christ says: "You have not done this, you have not done that." Of the other he says: "She has done this, and in a manner most remarkable." To her there is the benediction of pardon and peace, the reward of her faith and loving service. While the self-righteous Pharisee is left to think of his ingratitude and hate, and is severely self-condemned.

This woman is left nameless. Doubtless she would have it so. But while she is nameless here forever, she is immortalized by her noble service of love rendered to Christ. Such a work cannot be mortal. Who in heaven will not want to see the blessed feet of Jesus so lovingly

kissed by this woman, and will not want to see this immortalized woman whose lips tenderly touched the feet of the incarnate Son of God? Devout pilgrims are literally kissing away a large stone—a huge boulder—on which, as tradition says, Jesus once leaned to rest while on a weary journey. Others still more devout and enthusiastic, consider it a special favor to be allowed to kiss the great toe of the statue of St. Peter in Rome. But only one is recorded as having devoutly and lovingly kissed the feet of Christ himself.

What an appreciation here on the part of Christ of true service rendered. It matters not by whom it is done, nor where, nor how, nor when. What a blessed thing that Christ is not a respecter of persons, but all may serve and be accepted and blessed. But sometimes there is a special work we may do—often something that has been refused or neglected by some one else, as in the case of the Pharisee. Strong desire moved by ardent love has great inventive powers to do something for the one loved. All may do something to prove their

love, but all cannot do the same thing. Who but a woman could have rendered the service of this nameless immortal—could have done it just as she did? The tears and the hair and the kisses, and even the anointing oil are all peculiar to her sex. A man could hardly have thought of such a thing. And it may even be questioned whether the whole performance was physically very agreeable to Christ.

And who but a sinful woman—very sinful—could have done this as she did it? Such love and humility as she manifested was, according to Christ's own explanation, the result of great forgiveness—a true appreciation of a great curse of sin removed. What but a keen sense of awful sin, and most ardent love for a pardoning Savior could have driven her to such service under the very eye of the hateful, criticising Pharisee?

One other thing we must notice before we turn from this exceedingly interesting scene. The woman through it all was perfectly silent, not a word is recorded from her lips. There is no confession of sin in actual words. Her

actions expressed more than her words could have done. And there is no profession of confidence and faith in Christ, there is no prayer for pardon, and there is no verbal avowal of love for him. But her actions are more eloquent than human tongue. The flow of the tears and the touch of the lips upon the soiled feet expressed the true state of the soul in the utmost degree. How much there is often in voiceless worship and devotion to Christ. The strongest faith and the sweetest love are not expressed by words. With what peace, with what a thrill of joy, this new-made, redeemed woman went out from the presence of Christ. She passes out and is heard of here no more, and her name will never be known until it is read from the Lamb's Book of Life.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAGIC TOUCH OF FAITH.

"She only touched the hem of his garment,
As to his side she stole,
Amid the crowd that gathered around him,
And straightway she was whole.

"She came in fear and trembling before him,
She knew her Lord had come;
She felt that from him virtue had healed her,
The mighty deed was done."

—G. F. Root.

We are in the midst of a group of most interesting and instructive miracles. A cluster than which there is none more important in the lifework of Christ. After a busy day's work in Capernaum, Christ gave orders to enter the boats and cross the little sea of Galilee. They are soon all aboard and under full sail for the eastern shore of the lake. The evening is pleasant and balmy, scarcely a zephyr fans their brows or causes a tiny ripple on the glassy waters.

In a little while they are free from noise of the busy coast, and Christ, being weary with his day's toil, finding a quiet nook in the stern of the boat, is soon fast asleep. The disciples, anxious to give their Master a quiet rest, gently steered the boat towards their destination. But, as is frequently the case on that little sea, especially in that season of the year, there is a sudden change in the weather. The sky is suddenly overcast with storm clouds. The gentle zephyr has grown to monstrous, raging winds, and the waves like billows roll and begin to splash and pour over the deck of the little vessel. Still Christ calmly sleeps, unconscious of the threatening danger. The shipmen strive hard to reach the shore, but the harder they strive the more violent and dangerous the storm becomes, until they find themselves overpowered and at their wits' end. They become alarmed at the situation and arouse Christ, and in almost chilling language ask him of his care for them.

With a word of gentle reproof for their lack of faith, he rises and rebukes the wind, and all

is immediately quiet. The great Lord of nature simply speaks to the raging elements and they are subdued. The disciples have gained a new idea of their Master. "What manner of man is this," say they, "that the winds and the seas obey him?" They had seen many miracles wrought by him, but none just like this. He never before appeared so much in the attitude of a mighty Creator. He is not only Lord supreme over men and human disease, but over winds and waves as well.

They pass on and soon land on the other side, the country of the Gadarenes, for the most part a wild, rocky country. The purpose of this trip soon appears. No sooner had they landed than a remarkable personage approaches him. A man out of the tombs, naked, wild and desperately fierce. He was absolutely beyond all human control. On his arms were remnants of chains and fetters with which he had been bound in vain. All attempts to tame him were utterly futile. Possessed with superhuman strength and devoid of all reason, he had long been given over to his wild career.

His home was among the tombs and in the wild mountains round about. His horrid, self-inflicted punishments—cutting himself with rough stones; his hideous appearance and his wild, weird cries of despair, made him the terror of the whole community. He was a demoniac of the very worst form, defying every effort to subdue him. He was not the victim of only one demon, but a whole legion were huddled in his benighted soul. The torments of this man, both physical and mental, were of the utmost degree. His was a case of long standing, and he was so desperately wretched that it seemed to have been a relief for him to inflict upon himself the most ghastly sufferings and wounds. His was a veritable hell. He was absolutely in the hands of the tormentors, whose hellish delight was in driving their victim to the worst forms of suffering. What an illustration this of what a man must be when given over to the power of the devil, either in this world or in the world to come. It is interesting to see what will take place when this man, who is nothing but a nest of

demons, and Christ come together. We would naturally think that the power and authority —the divinity—of Christ would be severely put to the test. There was here a concentration of demoniacal powers, but the result is remarkable.

As soon as Christ is fairly landed this demonized man approaches him, not for combat nor defiance, but to worship and to acknowledge him to be the Son of the most high God. He begs for mercy; not the man, but the indwelling demons are the spokesmen. What a testimony here to the divinity of Christ. This witness completes the circle. From above God speaks with audible voice and says: "This is my beloved Son." The visible form of the Holy Spirit descends upon him at his baptism as a witness. Holy angels repeatedly minister to him as the Son of God. Then, both his friends and his enemies, testify that he is the Son of God. Here demons from the nether world declare that they know him to be the Son of the most high God. The infidel alone stands in opposition to all these witnesses.

Alone he stands and in the face of heaven and earth and hell, yea, in the face of the intelligent beings of the universe, denies the divinity of Christ—gloomy and peculiar, but not grand.

What a confession of guilt on the part of the demons. What a begging, not for mercy, of which there is none for them, but only for leniency. Had these demons escaped from their place of torment and found a temporary hiding place in the person of this wretched man? Had they here found a semi-surcease, and were begging not to be returned to their own place? Their request was at least in part granted, and they were allowed to go into the swine. But from the disaster that followed, it is quite reasonable that the demons were defeated in their own game and hurled themselves into perdition, as did their prince and father, Judas, when he went out and hanged himself. The man was completely restored, clothed and in his right mind.

What a multitude of interesting and important questions come up in connection with this

remarkable case—questions which we cannot here consider. The whole question of demonology—of demoniacal possession—of psychophysics, of polidemoniacs, demonized swine, and such like.

But we must follow the Savior as he immediately recrosses the sea of Galilee and meets another one of the nameless monuments of his work. He had no sooner recrossed than he was approached by one Jairus, who besought him to come immediately to his house for his daughter was at the point of death. While he is on his journey thither he is surrounded and pressed by a throng of people, eager to see all that he might do.

But in this vast, jostling crowd there is one character of special interest—an afflicted woman. She had, no doubt, dropped into the crowd at some point along the road, and was eagerly, yet very quietly, pressing her way through to the central figure, Christ. She desired to pass unnoticed by the throng, and even by Christ himself. Just like many who act as if they were really and sincerely desiring to be

saved—to be Christians—without either the world or Christ knowing it. Will they never learn that such a thing is impossible? Her case was a remarkable one. It was chronic, and, to all human skill, incurable. She had used all the means at her command to effect a cure; had sought the skill of the best physicians within her reach, and she had spent all her means—but to no purpose, only to make her worse.

What an illustration this of the utter inability of all human skill and wisdom to heal the sin-diseased soul. Yet how many will seek only human aid and perish! St. Augustine tells us that he sought through the whole realm of human knowledge, trying to satisfy the longings of his soul, but only to be disappointed and to learn the inadequacy of human knowledge. He found no peace until he came to the feet of Christ. The wretchedness of this woman's disease and her continual sufferings can be estimated only by her continued perseverance and experience in trying to be cured. How the afflicted will grasp at every straw and use

every means that may possibly bring relief. And how medicine makers and venders take advantage of afflicted humanity by thrusting upon them every imaginable cure-all that the ingenuity of man can invent. And how often unscrupulous physicians will take the last dollar from the afflicted when they well know that they can effect nothing by their treatment, and return absolutely nothing for value received.

For twelve years this woman had been grappling with a loathsome disease and a hoard of doctors only to grow worse. Without money and hopeless, she hears of the wonderful cures wrought by Christ, and, presumably, she had seen some one who had been healed by him and had learned the secret of obtaining the blessing. From the record it is certainly clear that she knew what was required to be healed. It was all reduced to one thought in her mind: "If I may but touch the hem of his garment." Several things are beautifully illustrated by this woman's actions.

1. Simple faith. What a clear conception

she had of this. Is it not probable that she had been instructed by some one interested in her case? Her faith was peculiar in its nature, no less than in its purity and simplicity. There was to be no asking for the blessing, no explaining of the disease and the difficulties under which she had so long labored. But her faith embraced all this—that Christ knew the nature of the disease, and the difficulties connected therewith. Whether all these things were in the mind of the woman or not, we are not able to say. It is, however, clear that her faith covered all this, and there were no difficulties in her mind. Faith removed them.

2. The touch. If she could only touch, not his person, nor his garment, but only the most distant part of his outer clothing, the hem of his garment. Her idea was that the least possible was sufficient to accomplish the work—only the touch of the hem of his garment—mark the three little words—only—touch—hem. They are all minimum words, showing the least possible external action. Faith was at its maximum and works at its minimum.

What a touch that must have been! Can any one conceive what must have been the experience of this woman when she had pressed her way through the crowd and had gotten within reach of the hem and put forth her finger to give the saving touch? What a sublime faith there was in that stretch of the hand—in that touch of the finger. There was the life-giving connection between the suffering body and the healing Savior. But this touch was peculiar in its nature. When Christ said: "Who touched me?" the answer was, that a crowd was pressing him on every side and many were touching him, and why should he ask such a question. But this touch was unlike all others. It was the faith in the touch that made all this difference.

Is it not precisely so still? Crowds go to the house of God, where God meets with his people. They all hear his words, they see his miracles in the word, and the miracles of saving grace. How the crowds will rush where there is a revival of religion, where men are healed. There the crowds are close to Christ; yea, they touch

him on every side, but are not healed. It is not the touch of faith. Only a few press to him with the outstretched hand of faith seeking to be healed by touching him.

3. There was the personality—the egoistic idea. I must touch—if I but touch. No one could do this for her. Her hand must stretch forth to touch. Herself and Christ only. No one can believe for us. No one can touch the hem and we be healed. No one can go to church for us. No one can offer our prayers. This is a personal matter between each soul and Christ alone. The egoistic idea is all important in religion. How this woman had all these things reduced to a fine point. She had precisely the correct idea, and firmly acted it out, and the result was a perfect cure. The idea, the action, the cure as result. Many have correct ideas of salvation. They know just what is needed and what is to be done, and how to do it, but never carry their knowledge into action. Their ideas are correct, but ideas alone will not save. The action—the touch—is absolutely essential.

4. The difficulties in the way. Her language implies difficulties as well as faith and assurance. How long she pressed on through the crowd we may not even surmise. But we can easily see that it required no small degree of determination and effort to accomplish her purpose. Her physical condition made it difficult and positively embarrassing for her to press through the jostling crowd, and literally force her way to Christ. Then the language implies, also, that she was exceedingly timid, and tried if possible to accomplish her purpose and retire unobserved. This natural timidity was no small difficulty in her way. But how bravely, yet how humbly, she overcomes these things, and presses through the moving mass of people to reach the object of her quest. How many, alas, are not as brave as this poor woman in coming to Christ. We see strong men who have not courage to confess Christ in a company of friends, when every difficulty is removed, and every inducement held out. How many excuse themselves from active service for Christ on account of

natural timidity—a very easy way to throw off responsibilities and duties. Is any one more timid than this poor, afflicted woman? Ye cowardly men and women look at this very striking picture. This woman eagerly dodging through the crowd with outstretched arm to reach as soon as possible the goal. Study that earnest face, that eye almost without a wink, count the beats of that anxious heart, and will it not arouse courage or bring the blush of shame to cheek of some in our churches? How this woman stands—nameless though she be—as a heroine of faith and courage! What an example! Just as she went to Christ, so must all go. Just as she obtained the desired blessing, so will every one who touches as she did.

5. What must have been this woman's joy when she felt the divine, healing power acting in her body. She was immediately healed, and see the result of the healing power! The sudden change from a long, lingering, painful affliction to an instantaneous cure must have been a most wonderful and delightful ex-

perience. What must have been her joy at the moment when she felt this divine effect! How like this is the experience of the soul that is thrilled with the joy of the new birth? How much Christ spoke of the joy of the believer. David says: "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation." Paul says: "Rejoice evermore, and again I say rejoice;" even in affliction he would rejoice. How much of joy there is in salvation. Let us not confound joy with happiness. Happiness is the result of things that happen in our lives and environments, and is common to all, both Christians and non-Christians. Happiness is transient and changeable, and depends largely upon circumstances. Christians may be happy or unhappy, and so may also non-Christians. The term happy is very close akin to lucky. But joyfulness is purely and exclusively a religious experience. Joy is one of those peculiar and exclusive words which has a meaning of its own, like Christian faith and hope and love. Joy is the result alone of a conscious salvation. In the greatest possible sufferings and in the most

unhappy conditions in life, the soul may still be supremely joyful; often the face of the afflicted saint beams with joy almost like that of Stephen when the divine Shekinah was reflected from his heaven-turned face. Joy in the afflictions and trials of life is one of the positive evidences of a heart united to Christ. We are repeatedly exhorted to seek this joy and to let it fill our hearts continually. This can be our experience only when we are in constant living union with Christ. It is the Christian's privilege to live joyously every day. And how much of life's needless sorrow and worry is escaped in this way. Let the soul be filled with joy and there will be no room for many of the annoyances of life.

6. Is it not a little strange that Christ did not know of this woman until she had drawn upon his divine bounty? Does this teach us that true faith draws blessings from God even before the case is made known to God on our part? It certainly demonstrates to us that the faithless touch is practically no touch at all. Our contact with Christ—our prayer, our

touch—is useless unless there be the proper mental and spiritual condition on the part of the toucher. Is not here the explanation of much of the silence on the part of God regarding the so-called prayers of his people? He never notices our touch because it is only external, and not of the heart. But the moment the woman touched him he knew it, not only omnisciently, but virtually. Like met like, will coincided with will. The proper conditions were fulfilled to make this touch a matter of experience to both parties.

7. What was the mysterious virtue that went out from Christ in response to and through the touch of this woman? It was a matter of instant perception on the part of Christ, and of instantaneous healing on the part of the woman. There was the subjective and objective, the positive and the negative, the active and the passive, the healer and the healed. But there are some curious facts concerning this virtue—this healing power that passed from Christ into the woman.

First, it was in Christ ready to act under

certain conditions apparently without the exercise of the will of Christ, and without his knowledge until it was actually done. Christ did not by the exercise of his will send this healing power into the woman, for he knew nothing of her until she was already healed. It would appear then that this virtue or power is in Christ ready for immediate action and use whenever the proper conditions are fulfilled by the one seeking it.

Second, this virtue seems to be all-healing, omnipotent in its nature. No difference what the nature of the disease, it is the same for all. Had the woman's affliction been anything else, the result would have been precisely the same —she would have been healed.

Third, there was the actual imparting of a something, a virtue, a power, that healed. There was an adequate cause that produced the effect. Is not this true in all the operations of God? Does not this lie at the foundation of creation and providence and what we term natural laws, and of redemption as well? There is always the adequate cause, a sufficient

force, whatever may be the medium through which this force operates.

Fourth, but there was not only the power or virtue, and the medium, but also the proper state or condition on the part of the woman. This condition was faith on her part. Until there was this faith there could not be the transmission of the healing virtue or force. Without faith she could not be the recipient of the healing power. Hence faith is not a blind nonentity, but it is a soul-state, without which certain effects upon the person cannot be produced by the divine virtue or agency. This faith seems always to be the condition necessary to the reception of the divine power, whenever the recipient is a rational free agent. And, strange as it may appear, faith is also the condition of blessings upon third parties, especially when the third party is not in a proper condition to exercise this faith in his own behalf. So the sick were healed and souls saved through the faith of third parties. Faith is that which makes it possible for the given cause to produce the desired effect. Faith is

that state of the soul that makes it possible for the divine force to do its work. When we speak of faith being a condition, we mean a moral state, not a mere stipulation or article of agreement by which something shall be done. The latter would mean that I will be saved because I believe certain things about Christ as the Son of God. The other means that I will be saved because of a definite moral condition of my soul which brings me into certain relations with God and makes me the recipient of his divine saving energy in my soul. The one is a mere mental act. The other is a moral or spiritual state or condition.

Fifth, this places the divine blessing—according to this woman's case—not only within reach of the believer, but absolutely at his command. This woman obtained this healing virtue by her touch, her soul being in the proper state to receive the blessing, or power. This was the difference between the touch of this woman and the touch of others in the crowd. There was nothing in the actual touch as such, but was in the state of the soul that

put forth that touch. I hold in my hand two pieces of metal precisely alike—they are both iron. I touch one to a block of iron but there is no effect. There is no affinity between the two. I touch the other in precisely the same way and at the same place, and it adheres closely to the block of iron. The difference is in the two pieces of iron, not in the block. One of the pieces is magnetized, the other is not. The magnetic condition is different. The condition of the iron block was precisely the same for both pieces of iron. There was precisely the same virtue, power, cause in Christ when others touched him, but there was not the state of soul in the touchers to draw forth that virtue. But when the finger of the woman touched him the virtue instantly flowed out into her, just as the electric current flows along the wire, when the proper connections are established and the proper conditions exist. In fact, so far as we can see, nothing could prevent the going out of this virtue when the conditions are fulfilled. Is it not so with God's blessings for all of us, as it was in this case?

Sixth, where this faith, soul-state, has its origin, is entirely another question. Whatever be its origin, it alone is that condition of soul in which (not on which) the divine virtue is obtainable. It is also certain that the will and purpose of the recipient must be in harmony with the will and purpose of Christ—the bestower of the healing virtue. Indeed, the will and purpose are essential elements of true faith. This nameless woman in her humility is the unique illustration of this conception of faith. Her condition, all the circumstances and the immediate result make the illustration complete, and make her the perfect model.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOREIGNER'S CONQUEST.

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.
Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things or great or small;
Be thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom and my all."
—From the German, by H. Bonar.

From the busy scenes of Jerusalem Christ suddenly takes his departure, and this time, contrary to his custom, he goes beyond the bounds of his circuit into the regions of Tyre and Sidon. This digression is doubtless made for some special purpose. And as he went beyond his ordinary circuit, may it not be prophetic of a work that is out of his ordinary line?

Tyre was at this time a large and powerful city, second to Jerusalem only, and being on

the seacoast, it was in some respects even more important than the Holy City. A thousand years before the birth of Christ, Tyre rivaled Jerusalem. While Solomon reigned, and his kingdom was in its palmiest days, Hiram was king of Tyre and the special friend of Solomon. It was Hiram that brought the cedar timbers from Lebanon to Solomon for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. More than three hundred years before, Alexander the Great conquered Tyre. Even a thousand years before the Alexandrian conquest, Tyre was an important city, and when Abraham tented at Mamre and sojourned in Egypt, and Sodom and Gomorrah were flourishing, Tyre was a thriving town, sending her trading vessels to many points on the Mediterranean, and, possibly, as far as Spain. At the time of Solomon and onward, Tyre was the port through which foreign trade was conducted. The territory governed by Tyre and Sidon was not large but was at times quite important.

On this journey Christ went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, presumably not into the

city of Tyre, but simply into the country under their jurisdiction. It is not known that Christ was ever in these regions before, but the record would imply that they had at least heard of his fame. He was, however, careful not to make himself known. But he was not entirely concealed, as appears from what transpired while there. It is a comforting thought that redeeming grace is not confined to a single nation or race of people. But in the last grand total of the redeemed there appears an innumerable multitude from every nation and tongue and people who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and all join the great chorus in singing the songs of redeeming love.

And not all of the nameless immortals are descendants of Abraham, but some are Gentiles, demonstrating the fact that even these special blessings are not reserved for a chosen race, but may be won by all. Divine grace can do the same for all mankind, and faith wins the diadem of victory from the hand of Christ, whether the believer be in the line of

promise or of the most remote heathen. Christ in his blood relationship and in his work of redemption, is intimately connected with the Gentile world. Nothing is more interesting than to study the points where he came in contact with the Gentile world. Occasionally a stranger would press in and carry away a prize, putting to shame the specially chosen and privileged people. And while Christ confessedly came to seek the lost sheep of the House of Israel, he never refused to confer even the choicest blessings upon the Gentiles whenever the conditions were fulfilled. His own definition of his mission is "to seek and to save sinners"—not Jews nor Gentiles as such, but sinners of all nations.

Of all the Gentiles with whom Christ comes in contact during his ministry none is more interesting than the woman who came to him as he was passing through the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. There is not recorded in all the inspired record a struggle more desperate and a victory more brilliant than this famous one. Even the all-night wrestling of Jacob with the

angel, and the determined "I will not let thee go," does not surpass this magnificent struggle. Nor is the victorious title, "Israel," conferred upon the prevailing Jacob more significant than the remarkable exclamation of the conquered Christ when he said, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The case under consideration is an unusual one, and Christ's treatment of it is quite unique, the like of which does not elsewhere occur, and such as could hardly be expected from Christ. A casual looker-on might very easily conclude that Christ's treatment of this woman was positively unkind. It is nevertheless true that in this case, as in all others, things were so done by Christ as to be most instructive and most beneficial, not to the immediate beneficiaries alone, but to the disciples, and to the church and believers in all time. These are great, universal object lessons, as well in their personal application as to humanity itself. When the beloved Lazarus died Christ said to his disciples, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there," for this death

afforded a rare opportunity for the teaching and illustrating of some great doctrine yet to be taught them, and to the world for all time, and which could be done in no other way. It is often true that when a great principle is to be established, or truth illustrated, great trial and suffering must be endured by some one, and frequently the sufferers are the best people. Such was the case with Job. A great question was to be settled once for all, a universal principle was to be established for all time. But this could be done only by some representative character passing through the severest possible test, which requires temporary suffering. Christ is himself an illustrious example of this kind of suffering. In the case before us we see Christ dealing, not with his own people, nor with some individual believer, but with the suffering world in the very last throes of despair.

What could better represent the world in its helpless ruin than this foreign woman coming in her desperation to Christ for relief? The multiform nationality of the woman may well

represent the promiscuous Gentile world. She was a woman from Canaan, by birth a Greek, and by nation a Syro-phenecian. Hence about as thoroughly Gentile as one could imagine. From her case it would be impossible to argue that any particular Gentile nation was either favored or rejected by Christ. How this woman knew anything about Christ is not at all revealed. It is, however, not strange that she had heard of him, and that she came to him for relief. She had an afflicted daughter, probably an only child, and the affliction was something not only annoying, but exceedingly alarming, so much so that the mother was terrified. The daughter was grievously tormented with a demon. It was an extreme case, and it is presumable that the woman in her distress had exhausted every means that might bring relief, and had inquired in every direction, hoping that she might hear of some one that could render aid. And it is not impossible that she had heard of the wonder workings of Christ, and was carefully watching for an opportunity to present her case to him.

When we have a special and grievous affliction in our family, how many remedies will be suggested; how we will hear about doctors and medicines and cures that otherwise never would have come to our knowledge. Naaman, because he was a leper, heard of Elijah the great prophet. Necessity is indeed the mother of invention. But for this demon-possessed girl, this woman would, no doubt, have remained in ignorance of the very existence of Christ, and she certainly never would have known him as she did after this interview regarding her daughter. The first thing worthy of special notice in the case of this woman is the difficulties she encountered in her approach to Christ. And in the study of these we see her indomitable will and determination which led her to victory.

1. In coming to Christ for such a favor she must surmount the national difficulty. In that country and time national differences were much more difficult to overcome than in our times. This woman was the veriest Gentile, and Christ had distinctly asserted that his

mission was not to any except the Jews. She was an outsider in the strictest sense. This was in itself a difficulty that was apparently insuperable. She was asking for something that did not belong to her, and to which she had positively no claim. It was presumption in her to ask for this favor. But, either unmindful of this or with a determination to overcome it, she came and presented her claim and eagerly pressed her case. She had only one object in view—success.

2. When she came and presented her case, Christ was conspicuously silent. He answered her not a word, as if utterly to reject her without a hearing. The implication is that she stood at some distance from Christ, feeling that she was a stranger, and perhaps did not know how near she might approach him with impunity. This silence on the part of Christ was something unusual in cases of distress and suffering. We are not told that Christ was busily engaged just at this time—he was, however, never too busy to minister to the needy. Christ was in a house, and desired that his

presence should be concealed from the public. How often the woman claimed his attention is not mentioned. But he gave her no answer.

3. The silence of Christ does not discourage the woman. She changes her tactics, and makes her plea through the disciples, urging them to plead her case and intercede for her. This she continues until they come to Christ and ask him to grant her request and send her away—her cries are beginning to annoy them. Her importunity has become exceedingly pathetic, until the hearts of the disciples are touched by the evident distress of the woman, and they are anxious that she should obtain her request. But Christ explains to them the reason of his apparent indifference. She is a foreigner, and it is out of his line and jurisdiction. Thus the woman is again repulsed. It appears a little strange that he should refuse a blessing on such grounds—and especially such a request as this. But, as we shall see, there was an element of maneuvering in his conduct that is of prime importance. It would seem that by this time the woman would

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be totally discouraged and even disgusted, and would hopelessly turn from the scene, doomed to endure her unhappy fate as best she could. But she is still unwilling to give up the struggle, and appears to be more determined than ever.

4. She again changes the form of her appeal. She now comes and falls at his feet and pleads for mercy. Is there any significance in the verbal change of her appeal? Hitherto she had addressed Christ as the Lord, the Son of David, thus by the very designation excluding herself, for she could claim no relation to David. But now she addresses him as the Lord of mercy. Mercy must transcend all national distinctions. Mercy must ignore all petty jealousies, and at times even common courtesies in order to bestow needed blessings. The cry has now become that of an utterly helpless victim. All she can now do is to throw herself on his mercy. The cry of, "Lord, help!" revealed the profoundest sense of utter helplessness. Was not this enough to move the hardest heart? But, strange as it may appear, Christ again

rejects her, and this time more severely than ever before. His language is unexpected and remarkable—language that we would scarcely expect from the Son of God, the friend and Savior of sinners—whose express mission is to bring relief, to heal and to bless, and who so emphatically said that he would in no wise turn away any that came to him. Do not his actions here contradict those sublimely full and free invitations? He not only refuses to bless her, but he repulses her with language that would seem to be an intentional insult. He uses the harshest terms to designate her Gentile nationality. It is not proper, says he, to take the bread from the children's table and give it to the dogs. She, being a Gentile dog, was thus entirely excluded from any portion. There is nothing for her.

Will not this instantly and forever repulse her? It would seem that such was the purpose of Christ in using these words. But just the unexpected again occurred. Instead of yielding in despair, the supreme moment of her victory had arrived, and the golden opportunity was

presented. As if imbued with sudden inspiration she grasps the very words of Christ, and with an unanswerable retort she silences him and in triumph seizes the prize. Her answer to Christ is transcendently beautiful, and absolutely invincible. The reproachful word "dog" was her deadly weapon. With it she felled the son of God and scored the most sublime victory on record. "If I am a dog, so be it, I still claim my portion. There is a portion even for the dogs under the table; this I claim." This could not be denied her, and her portion was all she asked. Thus the last difficulty was overcome and the victory achieved.

What a lesson there is here for us to consider. Like this woman, we often do not know what our portion is, and consequently our prayers and desires are not to the point. She became willing to take just what was her part —the portion of a dog. Here her will and the will of Christ coincided, and the blessing must be granted. But when she had prevailed in the struggle, Christ granted her the very bless-

ing she at first asked—her daughter was made whole—the demon was cast out from that very hour. It appears then that there was no real opposition on the part of Christ—there was no impossibility nor even impropriety in granting this blessing to this foreign woman, but she was not at first in the right attitude to receive the blessing. What transpired was only a necessary preparation on her part. From her first request to her final victory there is a very great change in her attitude toward Christ; there is very marked progress in two important things—in faith and in humility. By her faith she conquered, but that faith could not even exist until there was the proper condition of things. She must be repulsed, once, twice, thrice, yea even four times before the conquering climax was reached. It was through a storm of opposition that she gained the stronghold. Two things are to be especially observed in this woman's case—the constant ascent toward climactic faith, and the constant descent toward climactic humility, and they reach their limit when

she lies at Christ's feet. Humility admits that she is only a Gentile dog, while faith claims a dog's portion of the blessing. Notice some of the steps in this transformation:

1. The first attitude—she stood at a distance and called to the Son of David to have mercy on her. It is quite evident that neither humility nor faith were prominent in her attitude or language. She cries, calls again and again but evokes no response from the Master. Her tone and position both indicate rather a command than true prayer. Her voice was certainly heard by Christ, and yet she was not heard. She certainly prayed, and yet she did not pray. Her position and prayer at this point represent precisely the larger part of prayer offered to God by professed Christians. It is rather commanding God to give us what we would like to have, than worshipful and humble asking for what we need and for things agreeable to his will. The granting of the request at this point of the procedure was an impossibility according to the laws of divine grace. The proper conditions had not been

satisfied. Had the blessing been given at this point Christ would have violated the most important principle in the divine economy of redemption, the woman would have lost the greatest blessing of her life, the church would have been without one of the most brilliant illustrations of faith, and the Bible would have been minus one of its brightest and most valuable jewels.

2. The first attempt being an utter failure, the woman changes her attitude somewhat and addresses herself to the disciples of Christ and cries after them, attempting to reach the ear of Christ through them. She continued in this until they began to be annoyed by her crying after them, and they appeal to Christ in her behalf, asking that her request be granted. Here we notice a decided advance on the part of the woman toward Christ. She now begins to understand that more than a mere formal asking is necessary. She is becoming more humble, and she realizes more the dignity of the person to whom she has come. And withal she manifests an increas-

ing determination to succeed. And these new ideas of Christ only strengthen her faith in his ability to grant the blessing she sought. She is growing stronger, and at the same time realizes more and more her utterly helpless condition. We note, also, a change in Christ. He is willing at least to answer the disciples as they present the woman's petition, however unfavorable it may be. But now they have his reason for not granting the blessing. The woman doubtless hears his refusal, and considers what is to be done next. Will she now surrender the case, give up in despair and return to her wretched home disappointed and hopeless? This thought she cannot entertain for a moment, although she has been twice rejected.

3. But there is another act in the scene. We next see her an humble suppliant bowing at the feet of Christ begging for mercy. Here again there is an advance beyond her former position. The second denial was a great trial of her faith, but instead of repulsing her, it only draws her closer. Her increasing faith

and humility are manifest in her progressive action. But there is a more decided advance in her humility. First was simply the request, or demand, then the earnest pleading with the disciples, now it is prostration and most humble worship, begging for mercy. Here is a clinging faith like that of Jacob wrestling with the angel, and a profound sense of utter helplessness. She realizes that it is an only hope. And here is an increase of humility, such as we cannot fully appreciate unless we knew the social standing of this woman. She may have been wealthy and of high social standing among her people, and knew nothing of the grace of humility. May not this explain, in part at least, Christ's apparent indifference to her at first? Is it not to teach us that the hand that receives the blessing, whether it be that of a king or of a slave must be extended by the suppliant at the feet of Christ?

4. But once more she is repulsed. Even as she lies at his feet she is refused the blessing she craves. To her prayer for mercy Christ replies that it is not proper to take the child-

ren's bread and give it to the dogs. Was it to humiliate her still more? Was it once more to try the genuineness of her faith? Was it to ask the question whether she was really helpless and in earnest in this matter? But it is just at this point that she gains the victory. She has now reached her extremity, which creates Christ's opportunity. Three or four climaxes here meet, as the rays of light and heat through a great burning glass meet to create the intense burning heat. So here all the powers of the soul with their utmost force and tension have reached their combined climax. Here faith has reached its utmost limit. Nothing but an absolute faith—a determined grasp on Christ as the one who alone could and would save, could have forced her to continue as she had done up to this point. Along with this faith there is sublime humility which has prostrated her at the feet of Christ and made her willing to be anything in order that she may obtain the blessing. Again there was the complete surrender of her will to the will of Christ. It was no longer what

she wanted, but only what he had to give her —mercy alone was now her plea. But once more, there was the keenest sense of extreme need of immediate help. And it must be done immediately. All had come to the ultimate point. Nothing beyond is possible on her part. Hence the result must be, the immediate bestowal of the blessing. Every condition was fully met, and she obtained the blessing sought. But the blessing obtained by this struggle was far more valuable than the mere healing of her daughter. She obtained not only this blessing, but she learned the secret of obtaining all blessings. Will not like faith and humility, submission and dependence always meet with the same divine approval? Is there not here a secret for all? Will not Christ do for each one of us to-day precisely what he did for this woman, if we fulfil the conditions as she did? Has the day and the necessity for such blessings passed away? Were these gifts and powers given to the earlier Christians only temporary? When were

these things revoked? Has Christ revoked them, or has the church by her lack of faith and her worldliness lost these blessings and the power to obtain them? The church today argues that the gift of miracles and the obtaining of miraculous blessings were temporary and belonged only to the very early church, and that these gifts and blessings are not needed now. There is however, no Scripture to support such arguments. It certainly is apparent that the gift of miracles and the obtaining of miraculous blessings is precisely coextensive with the commission to preach the Gospel to all nations. The arguments and explanations usually given are nothing more than a weak apology by the church for her weakness and faithlessness by which she has lost these gifts. Why cannot we do these things? The answer comes from Christ to us as it did to the disciples when they could not heal the young man: "Because of your unbelief." "This sort," continues Christ, "goes out only by prayer and fasting." Prayer and fast-

ing are lost arts in the church of to-day, and fun and feasting have been substituted for them, and the church says we do not need these gifts and powers—rather, she does not want them—they are not in harmony with modern religion, when preachers strive for easy, honorable places and fat salaries, and the church wants tickling rather than teaching, and gossip rather than Gospel.

Who was this nameless woman? Does she appear anywhere else in the world's history? Why was not her name left on record for future ages? But what is there after all in a name? The loss of her name only makes her actions more prominent, for we can know her only through her works—these will stand the test of all time. When Tyre will have passed into oblivion, this event will appear only the more prominent, and this woman's deed will appear woven in immortelles above the Forgotten city. She is a remarkable illustration. This event could not have occurred with a Jew. There must be a heathen woman, and then all the attendant circumstances necessary

to make the work just what it was, and what Christ intended that it should be for all time. We have in this explained to us why Christ passed through the coasts of Tyre and Sidon upon this occasion.

CHAPTER V.

THE CROOKED MADE STRAIGHT.

"The Savior smiles! Upon my soul
New tides of hope tumultuous roll!
His voice proclaims my pardon found,
Seraphic transport wings the sound.

"Earth has a joy unknown in heaven,—
The new-born peace of sin forgiven;
Tears of such pure and deep delight,
Ye angels! never dimmed your sight."

—A. L. Hillhouse.

Before us is a most pitiable object—one that appeals to our sympathies without regard to her financial or social circumstances. Whether she be intellectual and intelligent, or feeble minded—an object always noticed and looked upon as one of the unfortunates of earth, absolutely beyond all human skill to remedy, is unimportant. It is a crooked woman. A woman with her body all bent together and deformed.

Everything else in the world may be crooked

and is crooked. There are crooked men, crooked animals, crooked trees, crooked everything. But a crooked woman is worst of all. Nothing God ever made is more beautiful and attractive than the pretty, well formed and straight woman. She arouses the slumbering admiration of even the rudest men, and is admired by all. Female beauty surpasses all other forms of the beautiful. It should be cultivated and preserved and admired as one of the choicest gifts God has bestowed upon the human race. It is a sin to be homely and deformed when it can be prevented. The woman who cares not for her personal appearance, is apt also to neglect the moral and spiritual condition of her soul. The two seem to be very closely allied. Carelessness and filth and moral depravity are born of the same parent.

How unfortunate is the woman whose body is deformed or bowed together. Whatever other graces she may possess, whatever attractions she may have, all cannot entirely compensate for this defect. With men the

case is somewhat different. With them the matter of personal appearance is not so important a consideration. They are not expected to be pretty. Not so much depends upon the physical form. They can make their way in the world, they can even marry, in spite of their looks and physical defects. But not so with the crooked woman. She is specially unfortunate.

And this particular woman was hopelessly so. She could in no way lift herself up. She had been a long time in that condition. By some fell accident or grim disease, eighteen years before, she was put into this unfortunate and suffering condition. Christ says, however, that she was bound in this shape by Satan—evidently here meaning the devil. Was it some form of demoniacal possession with which she was afflicted? There is no evidence that she was mentally deranged, or that she was morally worse than others. Does Christ here teach us that special physical afflictions and deformities are special feats of the devil? This woman, says he, was bound

by Satan. Are all such cases bound by Satan? Were they so during Christ's life on earth, and are they so still? Are all the crooked and deformed in this age of the world bound by Satan? Or was this a peculiar case? Or does Christ simply mean that this woman's affliction, and all like cases are the direct or indirect result of sin in general, of which the devil is the author? It is presumable that he did mean something more than the ordinary consequences of sin to which all are subject. He seems to imply that this case was the special work of the devil, and makes that one plea in justification of the healing being done on the Sabbath day. But if this case was the special work of the devil, were not all similar cases in his time, and if they were so then, why are they not so now? Is there any essential difference between physical affliction now and in the time of Christ? Was demoniacal possession an affliction peculiar to his time on earth, and if so, why was it so? Is there any essential difference between those possessed then and many cases of lunacy and

epilepsy and such like cases in our times? But perhaps these questions are all easier asked than answered. It is doubtles true, however, that we do not know how much of human suffering and misfortune may be the direct personal work of Satan. It is certainly his purpose to work all the suffering and mischief that comes within the range of his power. And we are told that he is continually seeking whom he may (is permitted to) devour. So that it is only a restraining power that keeps him from working general disaster and ruin among mankind. It is also a comforting thought, on the other hand, that there is a restraining power that says "thus far and no farther shalt thou go," and that we are in the care of angels who are God's messengers and agents to minister to those who are believers.

Many of these questions are interesting at present as bearing more or less directly upon the claims that are now made by many who propose to heal all manner of mental and physical ailments, not by divine power, but by the

application of power in man—of mind over matter. These healers claim to have rediscovered a long lost science and art, practiced by Christ, and many of the ancients. That any such claims to heal are genuine, remains yet to be demonstrated. We doubt not that the mind has great power over the body, and that many physical ailments are nothing more than nervous derangements resulting from morbid mental conditions, and that will power has much to do in the recovery from many forms of physical derangements. This is, however, not proof positive that the work of Christ was nothing more than ordinary mind over matter, or that all afflictions of the body may be healed by mental power.

The record tells us that this crooked woman was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, presumably to engage in worship, or perhaps drawn by a sight-seeing crowd, such as usually followed Christ through mere curiosity. She was, however, a daughter of Abraham. This may mean nothing more than that she was a Jewess. At any rate she was at the

proper place on the Sabbath day, and as it proved to be, she was there at the right time as well. It is not stated that she came with any expectation of being healed, or that she even entertained any such hope. She had no doubt heard of Christ, and possibly had seen some of his work, but had never come in personal contact with him. But her being in the synagogue was the occasion. Had she not been there, she might have remained crooked all her life.

How many, indeed, miss the greatest and richest blessings by not being in the synagogue at the right time—every Sabbath and at every service. How many remain crooked all their lives because they do not meet Christ in the synagogue—at church on the Sabbath day. How many have been straightened by being at church on the Sabbath? Aside from all the possibilities and circumstances that may arise, there are special promises that can be claimed only by meeting with Christ at the time and place he has appointed, and not to be there is to be the loser. The church build-

ing symbolizes the presence of God, where he reveals himself to his people for their worship and his blessings, and to ignore this is to forfeit God's most gracious offers of blessings to man. We are very seldom the recipients of God's special blessings away from church and church influences. Many are not blessed because they do not meet the conditions even of time and place. How many of the crooked, the feeble and the disabled in the body are the really faithful in the service of God, while many who are able bodied utterly fail of the grace of God because they do not place themselves in a position to receive the blessing. They are able in body and in mind to obtain the very best that God has to give, but they obtain it not because they are not at the synagogue.

Where the crooked woman is there is also the divine healing hand. That hand can make the crookedest straight—the worst deformities of body and soul. The hand that formed the worlds also formed the crooked serpent. The hand that regulates the movements of the

ponderous suns and guides the stupendous, swift-flying Arcturus in his vast unknown orbit, also directs the flight of the timid little sparrow in its daily quest for food. The hand that guides the scythe-winged lightning and shakes the heavens with thunder, tints the most delicate rose and causes the noiseless growth of the springing grass. That hand can bind up the broken worlds and scoop up the vast seas, and it can impart the healing touch to a deformed human being and wipe away a flowing tear. The hand that stretched out the north over the empty place and toucheth the hills and they smoke, that finger with its divine touch sends the current of divine elixir through the deformed human body and recreates every muscle and nerve, and out of ugliness and deformity brings forth beauty and health and joy.

Nor does the healing power extend only to the deformed body. But the soul as well may feel the thrill of the divine touch and be freed from its thraldom—its crookedness of sin. Passion and vice and every form of mental and

spiritual derangement quickly yield to the great Healer's touch, and the fears of the benighted soul flee before this divine light like the dark-winged angel of night before the beams of the ascending sun. What a world were this, were it not for this benign hand. In how many ways does it minister to our daily wants and desires.

It is not recorded that this crooked woman asked to be healed. The very sight of her infirmity moved the compassionate heart of Christ, and he would not let her depart in that condition. She then and there found the greatest of all temporal blessings. How must she have felt to have returned to her home a straight and well woman! What joy there was in that home. Did they recognize her as the poor, deformed creature that had left the home that morning to go to the synagogue? Crooked for eighteen years, become a weariness to the eyes of her family and friends, and now suddenly and unexpectedly made perfectly straight. What a find this was to this poor invalid.

How many of life's choicest blessings are thus found. Truly the kingdom of God—the richest blessings God bestows, temporal and spiritual, are like the treasure hid in the field, and are found when they are not especially sought. The toiling farmer is grubbing his land and suddenly discovers a gold mine, and soon his rugged hills are worth a mint and he is rolling in luxury and wealth. A young man is invited to spend an evening socially with a neighbor to meet a visiting friend. The sweet voice, the graceful manner, the bewitching expression of the eye of the new acquaintance awakens a strange emotion in his bosom, and he soon discovers that he has found his future wife. Some accidentally discover that they have special talents that become their fortune. But Christ teaches us not to wait for these accidental finds. He bids us seek, with the promise that we shall find. The accidental finds are the exceptions. Generally the prizes are obtained only by careful and persistent seeking. The most valuable inventions are not stumbled upon, but are the

rewards of toil and continued search—days of hard work and nights of sleepless thought. Only a few things come by the grace of God unaccompanied by human effort and the wise use of means. Nine-tenths of genius is only the gift of persistent toil, a gift which Dame Nature places within reach of all, but whose value is appreciated only by the few. While a few of those who were healed by Christ accidentally found him, the great majority of the beneficiaries obtained the blessings by earnest seeking. Nor were any of the seekers ever turned away unblest.

But whether this crooked woman sought the blessing or not, she obtained it. And we would suppose that all who knew of her condition would rejoice. To see a poor deformed woman made straight and return to her home entirely made anew; who would not be glad! But even here the vile objector raises his voice. There are those who can find fault with anything. Let Jesus Christ in the fulness of his love and mercy perform a most benevolent work upon a needy, suffering hu-

man being, and some one will find objection to the time or place or manner of the deed. Oh, the critic, the abominable fault-finder, in whose eyes everything is wrong! Here it was the ruler of the synagogue that was displeased, and how his objection shows the narrowness of his soul. It is difficult to see how the human soul could be reduced to such diminutive dimensions. Is it not easier for a Pharisee to go through the eye of a needle than for him to understand the broadness of saving grace? There are those who exhaust all their skill to find some objection or criticism against the church and Christians—not that the fault actually exists, but because the objector desires to cover some sin in his own soul. There are those who seem to think they are under no obligation to serve God so long as it is possible to find some fault with the church or some of its members.

This ruler of the synagogue saw Christ only through his own distorted, critical eyes, that misrepresented everything not made to fit them. It is very amusing to look through

glasses made for the purpose of distorting things, and they can be constructed to suit any fancy whatever. How many use such glasses.

Worst of all are the Pharisees. Every one else is inferior as seen by a genuine Pharisee. We can deal with sinners and bear with the weakness of Christians, we can endure the stubborn and kindly lend a helping hand to the unfortunate, but not even Christ himself could do anything with the self-righteous Pharisee. The subjects that baffle every preacher and Christian worker are those that sarcastically say: "I am just about as good as some of your church members." This is ancient Phariseeism reduced to its ultimate analysis.

The objection of the ruler of the synagogue was very astutely made. He did not speak to Christ directly regarding the miracle, but whipped him over the shoulders of the people by abruptly commanding them to come during the six days of the week to be healed and not on the Sabbath day. There is an undertone in his language which implies that Christ has

no conscience in the matter, he would just as soon heal on the Sabbath day as on any other day, so the evil can be corrected only by the people not coming on the Sabbath day and so give Christ no opportunity to profane the Sabbath. The ruler was indignant and spoke sharply to the people. They must observe the regulations of the synagogue.

Christ at once answered for the people, and stoutly reproved the hypocritical ruler, by showing him the inconsistency of his life. These very fault-finders would water and feed their stock on the Sabbath day to keep them from suffering. This required actual physical labor, and it is only humane that it should be done. But to heal a wretchedly afflicted woman, bowed together and bound by Satan was a great sin, if done on the Sabbath day. No wonder Christ sharply called him a hypocrite. It is almost incredible that men of reason should attempt to find fault with an act so clearly a work of necessity and mercy, and at the same time bearing every evidence that it was done by divine power and authority.

Could they be so blind and so prejudiced as to object to this? Truly none are so blind as those who will not see.

But one word explains it all—they were his adversaries. They bitterly hated him and could not tolerate anything he did. Not that they saw any real wrong in his work, nor that there was really any impropriety in the manner and time of doing it. But they were so envious of Christ that it was impossible for them to look on him with anything but an evil eye. Nothing is as unreasonable and as cruel as hatred and envy. When these are in the heart there is room for nothing else. Nothing in the life or character or work or dignity of the victim of hatred avails anything. It is simply "let him be crucified." The record of the life of Christ tells us that envy was the cause of opposition against him and that he was delivered to be crucified through envy. He was hated to death.

Four forms of sin are mentioned in the account of the arrest and trial of Christ that accomplished his crucifixion. The first, as we

have already seen, was envy on the part of his enemies. This envy had only one purpose —to put him to death. It would be satisfied with nothing less than to nail the son of God to the cross. Is envy now any less cruel than it was then? Will it still crucify Christ? Nothing is too revolting for envy to do, in the family, in society, in political life, yea even in the church of God.

But envy alone could not lay hands on its victim. It must find a handmaiden—a betrayer to deliver him up. Here the love of money—avarice—is a ready helper. Money answers all purposes—it secures the necessaries of life and brings luxuries and pleasures —and it hires men to betray the Son of God. A power for good or for evil is money. An avaricious Judas was ready to be hired to deliver his master into the hands of the enemy, and for thirty pieces of silver—the ordinary price of a slave—the bargain was closed, and the opportunity for the arrest carefully watched.

Once in the hands of the enemy and under

arrest, there must be some form of condemnation. But the life and work of Christ had been such that no charges could be preferred against him. Here falsehood offers its services. False witnesses are ready to testify to anything that is necessary to condemn him to death. With these at hand the mock trial proceeds until he is pronounced a blasphemer and is brought before the ruler for the death sentence.

The clever Pilate, however, finds no fault in him and proposes to release him. But this course is not pleasing to the people, and he is afraid not to please—he would rather crucify Christ—although contrary to his own judgment—than displease the people. Hence the last of the quartet of sins is servility—that sinful weakness which prefers to please the world rather than own and serve Christ—servility completes the work—it quickly signs the death warrant and delivers the condemned Christ into the hands of the executioner.

Thus envy, avarice, falsehood and servility

accomplish the death of Christ, envy being the instigator. It was the same form of sin that found fault with Christ for healing the crooked woman. But how beautifully Christ puts the adversaries to shame. Should they not have been ashamed to oppose such a miraculous work of mercy? Should there not always be shame when Christ is opposed and rejected? How the scene has changed since we first looked at this picture. Then we saw a strange woman bowed together and almost helpless, showing signs of long distress and suffering. Now we see her straight as a young woman, bearing every evidence of health and soundness of body. A remarkable transformation has taken place, such as had not been seen before. She returns to her home and we see her no more. Who she was we know not. She was nameless there in the temple and she is nameless still. Nor will her name ever be known until, with other nameless ones, it is read from the great Lamb's Book of Life. But while she is nameless here on earth, she is immortal. In spite of the envious objectors

she stands erect as a monument of Christ's work. She stands erect to testify to the world that there is healing for the crooked, whether it be the crooked in body or in business. The crooked in conduct or the crooked in the church, the crooked in thought or in word. For all such there is something better.

All may be made straight and the great straightener is Christ. It is a terrible thing to be crooked, and to live crooked, and to die crooked. But it need not be so. Christ came to make the crooked straight, and none are so gnarled and distorted and so knotty that he cannot make them after his own model of beauty and perfection. Perhaps no one can be more hopeless than was this crooked woman. She was not only healed but she is placed in that immortal group that clusters around the blessed Christ. They are the trophies of his redeeming work, the illustrations of his power to save from every form of affliction and sin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE.

"Yea, line by line, my life's dark page he gently read me o'er.
He spake in wisdom and in love as man ne'er spake before.
Against my soul, so stained with sin. no curse of wrath was hurled.
Then knew I it was Christ, the Lord, the Savior of the world."

—Anna Shipton.

The enemies of Christ exhausted every means by which they might find some accusation against him. His words were misinterpreted, his life was criticised and his noblest works of love and mercy were condemned and assigned to the agency of the devil. It may be naturally expected, however, that when Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, that the devil would put forth all his powers to defeat Christ, and use all the means available to that end. The devices of wicked men, the cunning influences of demons and Satan's

own incarnation in the person of Judas Iscariot, were some of the forces of the devil used in opposing Christ and his work.

The life of Christ was on the one hand a constant work of actual salvation, on every side he snatched suffering and perishing human beings from the tortures of disease and the jaws of death, and from the powers of indwelling demons; on the other hand, his life was a hand-to-hand conflict with the great arch fiend. And just as the work of Christ required his human incarnation, so to oppose him on equal grounds, the devil also became incarnate in the person of Judas, the betrayer. As the devil can transform himself into an angel of light in order to accomplish a purpose, so may he also become incarnate in that human nature which through his influence became sin-cursed and corrupt. Did not Christ say "Have I not chosen twelve of you, and one of you is a (the) devil—not a demon, but the devil?" This is the only place where a human being is ever called the devil. Many were possessed of demons. But the indwel-

ling demon and the man in whom the demon dwelt were two distinct persons. But Judas is the devil. Was not the tempter who strove with Christ in the wilderness for forty days only Judas, the devil incarnate, in the same sense in which Christ was God incarnate? The whole character and conduct of Judas go to prove this theory.

Our present study is another illustration of the wicked designs of Christ's enemies. Here is another effort to find some accusation. The whole circumstance is worthy of careful study. The effort against Christ is a most signal failure on the part of the opposition, and the victory is gained by Christ in the most illustrious manner. Never were a set of men more shamefully overpowered by a sense of guilt and more severely lashed by guilty consciences than were these. It is a striking comment on the moral condition of the community when every one of a crowd of men, professedly so chaste that they cannot endure an impure character, are in reality so corrupt and so severely self-condemned that they slink away like a

pack of guilty dogs. What an illustration of human depravity. Christ had come early in the morning into the city from the Mount of Olives, from the Hotel-Galilee, where was his accustomed lodging place, during his terms of preaching and teaching in Jerusalem. It was at Hotel-Galilee, and not in the country of Galilee, that Christ appointed to meet his disciples after his resurrection.

This morning he went directly to the temple and began to teach, and soon the crowd assembled to hear him as usual. Upon this occasion it was rather an unusual company that assembled. It was the outcome of a secret plot to confuse and catch him in his teachings. His doctrines had been rather displeasing to the Scribes and Pharisees and they were eager to find some clue by which they might formulate some sort of accusation against him. Their principal aim was to lead him to contradict the teachings of Moses. The Scribes and Pharisees were very scrupulous Mosesites by profession and in external forms, but in reality they were utterly anti-Moses.

This morning they force upon Christ a concrete case to tempt him to a positive statement and test. They think to compel him to pass judgment in an actual example presented, so as either to justify them, or contradict himself. Before him in the temple is a mob composed of Scribes and Pharisees and such others as have joined hands with them in opposing Christ. This mob is apparently composed of very upright, moral men, and they seem to be very angry and outraged at the conduct of a certain female whom they no doubt had secured for the occasion, for it was certainly a put up game, as appears later.

Not that the woman was by any means innocent, nor even falsely accused. But it was certainly not that they were so anxious to rid the city of such nuisances nor the sin of which she was accused that impelled them. It was Christ's blood for which they were really thirsty, and they were determined to shed it if possible.

A bloodthirsty mob is the most horrid spectacle ever contemplated. Men are never so

brute-like and unreasonable as in a promiscuous mob—they have neither souls nor brains. Here before Christ were angry, red faces on every side. Biting teeth seemed ready literally to devour the victim. Stout hands were clenching stones already uplifted to hurl with unerring and deadly aim the crushing blow. Deep muttering threats and cursings are heard from the lips of the more desperate element of the rabble.

A wretchedly dejected and besmirched female, half dead with fear, is dragged perforce into the midst of the mob immediately in front of and in full view of Christ. She is overwhelmed with shame and disgrace, and frightened almost to insensibility. She has been ruthlessly arrested by her own destroyers and dragged by mob violence into the temple and into the presence of Christ. The foreman of the mob, with a presumptuous and self-righteous air, briefly states the case, and the Mosaic law applying to it. There stand a host of witnesses ready to testify to the guilt of the accused. They stand in breathless silence

to hear the verdict of Christ. Half a score of brawny men are ready to hurl the deadly stone, each one eager to deal the first blow. Only a word, and the execution will follow as a sweet morsel. Not, after all, that they were so anxious to kill the woman, but simply to carry their point. Nowhere is reason so completely dethroned as when malice rules the mob. Anger is always unreasonable and unjust, but numbers seem to add power to every human movement, and the larger the mob the more completely have men lost their sense. Whenever the law is in the hands of the lawless, justice and mercy plead in vain.

But, to their surprise, the verdict is not rendered, and Christ seems even to be heedless regarding their indictment of the woman. He simply stooped down and wrote on the ground —what he wrote we may not even surmise, or why he thus acted may not easily be conjectured. He pretended not to hear them, and they continue urging the case. Was he deeply absorbed in some other question and was he figuring it out on the ground? Or was it to

show his contempt for their utterly hypocritical procedure? He was, however, not indifferent to what was being done. He not only heard their indictment and their appeal to the law of Moses, but his all-searching eye was reading the secrets of their hearts, which were even more sinful than the degraded victim they were trying to condemn. No doubt the very wretch who had effected her downfall was a leader in the mob, and loudest in condemning her, and ready to cast the first stone. A guilty conscience sometimes makes men display a wonderful show of bravery, when, by their daring boldness, they hope to cover up their own sins. How many who are condemning earnest, struggling Christians are thereby turning the eyes of the world from their own sins to the enormously exaggerated imperfections of those whom they criticise? The self-condemned are often the most unmerciful in their criticisms and condemnations, while the purest and most upright are the most forbearing.

Here all was centered on the accused woman. She was found in the very act of com-

mitting the sin for which they were so eager to stone her. The crowd of men were all apparently so pure and so innocent that they could not endure her in their sight. Could we but see that crowd of men as Christ saw it, what a picture it would present. What a demonstration of Pharisaical hypocrisy. What a show of depraved human nature. They still continued their accusations, urging Christ to pass sentence. At length he majestically lifts himself and speaks. How the men hold their breath, eager to hear what Christ is about to say. What is his judgment in the case? What he says is very brief, but it means immensely more than is expressed by the few words he uttered. Hear him firmly say: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Was this the signal for the onslaught? Did the wretched woman bow her head for the deadly blow? Why did not the whizzing stones begin to shower on her condemned and defenseless head? Christ's words imply a verdict of guilty as accused. It might be freely rendered:

"All right, the woman is guilty, and you have correctly applied the law to her case; proceed to the execution; only see to it that a pure, chaste man inflicts the penalty of the law; a man that is guilty of the same sin for which the woman is condemned dare not, according to the law of Moses, be executioner."

There was a peculiar silence in the crowd. The men begin to look at one another as if to see what effect this peculiar speech of Christ was producing upon them. Christ was again quietly writing on the ground, leaving the brawling accusers to meditate on the judgment he had rendered. Christ had found no fault with the law of Moses. He had found no objection to its application to the case in hand. He had not in any sense defended the woman nor palliated her crime. He simply states the true spirit and meaning of the law, and he gives no reason why the law should not be immediately applied. But is there one here that can legally do it? If the right man be here, let him proceed. The law will justify him.

But who in that crowd could abide by the conditions?

Aye, will not this condition stop every fault-finding mouth? Who can condemn and not condemn himself? "Judge not, that ye be not judged," for wherein we condemn others we also condemn ourselves. The letter of the law has been applied and the woman found guilty, but in the execution of the law, not only the letter, but especially the spirit of the law must be observed. The guilty shall not condemn nor inflict judgment upon the guilty. We might suppose that some of the enraged mob might feign innocence, or be desperate enough to proceed at once with the stoning. But this answer came so unexpectedly that it bewilders them, and it is so personal that it pricks the conscience of every accuser, so that they are all completely unnerved. How a guilty conscience makes a man a coward; how it withers his threatening arms and fists and turns his boasting to horrid shame. There they stood self-condemned before one another, for they were no doubt common partners in sin. They

were condemned by the very law they tried to enforce against the woman, and what was still worse, they were condemned by the very judge to whom they had brought the woman for condemnation. It is more than they can stand. Hardened wretches as they are, they begin to blush with shame. The forces that a little while ago were bold against the helpless victim now wither and fade with shame and defeat. Slowly the leprous posse begins to sneak out of the room, the oldest and likely the most guilty leading the retreat. Like whipped curs they hasten to hide themselves even from one another and from their guilty consciences. Were ever a set of men more completely defeated at their own game? Is there recorded anywhere a more striking illustration of the power of the truth on the guilty conscience? Guilt cannot endure light and truth. The conscience-condemned man is the weakest and most wretched being in existence. In a little while the woman is left standing alone. The stampeded mob had left

their prey and fled. Not one remained to see the end of the matter.

This all took place while Christ was yet stooping and writing on the ground. He had not driven the accusers away nor asked the woman to remain. He did not even look on. The truth was sufficient. It quickly and effectually did the work. The woman remained standing in the midst awaiting a second verdict, no doubt expecting a most severe rebuke and condemnation. She must have felt that such was due her.

Christ again raises himself up and looks on the woman before him. Not only the woman, but all of us may wonder what is going to take place. What verdict is Christ about to pronounce? What from the very nature of the case can it be? Is he going to question her as to her guilt and the extent and heinousness of her sin, and then judge her accordingly? This would be legal, and if this be done she is most certainly condemned, as also are all others. But the unlooked-for again happens, as it often does, however many there be who are always

ready to say sarcastically: "I told you so." But nothing was ever more unexpected and surprising than the issue of this trial. Instead of victory there is shameful defeat on the part of the accusers. And instead of judgment there is mercy for the accused; for the blackness of sin and guilt there is divine forgiveness. Christ did not come into the world to reckon sin with men, but to offer pardon and salvation. The question is not how much have you sinned, and what is the character of your sin, but "Wilt thou be made whole?" Though your sins be as scarlet or red like crimson they shall be as white as snow, if you be willing.

The woman stands uncondemned by both parties. The accusers were so overcome with a sense of their own guilt that they could find no condemnation even against this woman, and quietly left. And now Christ says: "Neither do I condemn thee." He came not to condemn the world but to save it.

Notice, however, the difference in the two parties. The ground of their acquittal is quite unlike. The accusers did not condemn because

they were themselves condemned. Christ condemned not because of divine grace. Here is the difference between guilty accusers and a holy, merciful Savior. The one loves and cherishes sin in his own heart and stones others for being and doing like himself. The other condemns sin but by grace saves the sinner. Human accusers love sin and kill the sinner, while Christ kills sin and loves the sinner. He gently adds: "Go, and sin no more."

He in no sense allows sin, but it is always "sin no more." "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." Have we ever heard these gracious words from his blessed lips? And have we ever spoken these words to those who may have sinned against us? Any one may accuse or find fault, but to forgive is Christlike. Is there not a world of meaning in that petition in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors?" It is a positive duty for us to pay our debts, but we must not forget that it requires much more grace to forgive a debt than to pay a debt, and there are times when it becomes a Christian duty to forgive a

debt. The forgiveness of Christ is unlike that of the world, or even that of the best and most liberal-hearted Christians. The forgiveness of men is usually no forgiveness at all. The very common and yet totally false theory is to forgive, but not forget. In other words, we agree to say nothing more about the offense, but in our heart there is the same feeling as before, and the same unwillingness to receive the offender into our friendship and confidence. If Christ did the same with us would any of us ever be saved? But if we don't, he will not.

How genuine religion compels our hearts to be right with our fellow men before they can obtain the full favors and blessings of God. The great principles of divine forgiveness are remarkable in their scope. The following points are worthy of special note, for they apply to us in our dealings with our fellow men as well as to God in his dealings with us. In the true spirit and act of forgiving an offender there is—

1. The complete forgiveness and removal of the guilt and the injury done to us by the

offender. The relation of the forgiven sinner to God is precisely the same as though he never had sinned. So it must be with those who have trespassed against us, if we would be like our divine Master. If this be not the true idea of forgiveness, it is impossible for man ever to be freed from guilt.

2. There is the complete forgetting of the offense. God will remember forgiven sins no more. They are blotted out—removed as far as the east is from the west. Until there is this complete forgetting of sin true peace and happiness is impossible. We enter not here upon the metaphysical impossibility of forgetting a thing. The trouble usually is unwillingness rather than impossibility. The metaphysical and the physical are largely controlled by the will, and will yield to the superior powers of love, which is the supreme love in the economy of redemption.

3. There is the complete restoration of the sinner to the favor and confidence of Christ. This may seem impossible, but complete pardon embraces it. Nowhere is the beauty and

infinitude of redemption—of divine grace—more fully demonstrated than in this act of restoration. By this act Christ becomes our brother, and we are made joint heirs with him. With men it may be very difficult to restore to our favor those who have sinned against us, but the divine injunction and the example of Christ demand nothing less than this. "Forgive us as we forgive" is the law. And Christ says if we do not from the heart forgive, we shall not be forgiven. This is indeed one of the most important as well as difficult things in all Christian experience.

4. It follows then, that true forgiveness removes all the scandal of sin. How often is it said that the sin is forgiven, but there remains the scar, the injured character, the scandal that will follow the victim to the grave. This is certainly not true of the soul in the sight of God. This is not the way Christ forgives. There is not only pardon, but restoration. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin and its consequences. Otherwise redemption were not complete.

5. But be it remembered that along with such pardon there is the positive injunction: "Sin no more." There is not the least possible justification of sin, nor any toleration of it in a free pardon. The central idea is the getting rid of sin. And this forgiveness is not only a wiping out of all past sin and guilt, but it becomes also a positive preventive of sin in the future. And here must come in all the active powers of the soul to fulfill this requirement. Go and sin no more means a complete reformation of the life and character. And when there is this, the offender is entitled to complete restoration to confidence and fellowship. Mercy, pardon, and "sin no more" are stupendous ideas in redemption. The first originates the plan. The second carries it out in its application to man. The third prevents the further spread and growth of the disease.

Look once more at this remarkable incident, and see the demonstration of another principle and the condemnation of another unjust and sinful custom. Society at once spews out the

unfortunate and guilty female, whether she has fallen by her own evil propensity or was dragged to ruin by a stronger hand. Public sentiment turns against her and she is mercilessly kicked out as though she were the only guilty party, while guilty men—usually the greater sinners—are permitted to enjoy all the privileges of society and are even respected. How many treacherous brutes walk our streets and visit our sisters and daughters with all the appearance of refined gentlemen, while inwardly they are so rotten that the vultures of hell turn away in disgust. Why should this be so, while the female wretches, the victims of these very men, are utterly rejected without even a hearing, and without a possibility of restoration? Does Christ in this case, which is ideal and universal in its application, make any distinction between the guilt of the male and the female? Is the shame any less on one than on the other? By his actions in this trial it would seem that Christ was more lenient with the woman than with the men. Oh, that God

would speed the day when guilty men will be stoned as severely and as promptly as guilty women, not by mob law, but by public sentiment and by the courts of justice that claim to enforce the laws, to punish sin and to protect the weak.

This nameless woman has become an everlasting monument of divine grace. And she stands as an exponent of Christ's own interpretation and application of the divine law. Here is a remarkable defeat of Christ's enemies in their attempt to convict him, and a triumph over malice and hypocrisy. What a difference between the assembling and the breaking up of this court. The accusing men go away in shame and condemnation, while the woman, pardoned and reformed, goes away filled with peace and joy, and Christ, for whose blood the mob was thirsting, is victorious and safe. Is this woman, sinful and disgraced, one of the blood-washed and redeemed? Is divine grace sufficient to lift one from so low and so degraded a condition and place her

at the right hand of God? How forcible is the language of Christ when he says that publicans and sinners will go into the kingdom of God while the Scribes and Pharisees will be left out. There will be many surprises in heaven.

CHAPTER VII.

THE POWER OF IMPORTUNITY.

"'Twas thus a widow poor,
Without support or friend,
Beset the unjust judge's door,
And gained, at last, her end.

"And shall not Jesus hear
His chosen when they cry?
Yes, though he may awhile forbear,
He'll help them from on high."
—John Newton.

Once more there is a widow. How often this class figures in the life of Christ, either in actual contact with him, or as used by him to illustrate and enforce truth. This time she is not one that comes to Christ himself for blessing; and she is not one of those with whom he actually met. She appears as an important and prominent character in a beautiful and striking illustration, setting forth the relation of the believer to God.

There is a reason why the divine Artist uses

a widow as the central figure rather than any other person. A widow alone fulfills all the requirements of a perfect illustration. There is no other person just as appealing as a widow in all the relations of life. In a sense she is the weakest of the weak, and the most helpless of the dependent. And, while she is an object of pity and deserves the sympathies of all, she is more imposed upon than any other class of persons.

But perhaps she is nowhere at a greater disadvantage than in matters of law. When she falls into the hands of the court, or goes to the law for redress, she has usually not much in her favor. If she is so fortunate as to have possessions, they are in danger of being devoured by unscrupulous lawyers. If she has no money she can hardly hope to obtain a respectable hearing. Nothing on earth is as unpromising as a poor widow's case in the hands of irresponsible, unscrupulous barristers.

Such is precisely the case in the picture before us. It is an extreme case. The characters are so selected that the logic of the pictorial

lesson is of the strongest and clearest form. The characters are very striking, and the personages exceedingly remarkable. There appear the very extremity of depraved humanity, the highest conception of benign divinity, and the most humble and helpless petitioner. These extreme characters are chosen and required by the divine Teacher to solve the problem in hand, to form the logic necessary, and to confirm the truth intended.

We have already seen something of the widow—the suppliant in the case. The next personage that demands our attention is the judge to whom the widow comes for redress. "There was in a certain city a judge," says Christ, "and there was also a widow in that city, and she came to the judge and asked him to avenge her of her adversary." This judge as described by Christ, is worthy of most careful study. Looking at him we see a hypocritically grave looking man, one who has somewhat the aspect of a judge indeed. The judge is just at the other extreme from the widow—independent, with an air of indifference. But

the character of this judge is an important element in this picture. And this character as described by Christ is the most remarkable, the meanest in all history. Not one word could be added that could darken the character of this man a single shade, yet only a few words were used by Christ in describing him, but these words are to the point.

First—It is said of this judge that he "feared not God." He was a totally godless man. He was totally devoid of a conscience, and had no sense of responsibility to any higher power. He was a complete outlaw in the divine government. Hence, no appeal could be made to him. His oath was nothing. He knew no power higher than himself. He was a law unto himself, and his own god.

Second—He had no regard for man. He had no sympathy, nothing by which he could be touched by his fellow man. He was outside the whole range of humanity. He had no superior nor equal, according to his own estimate of himself. Put together these two characteristics—no fear of God, and no regard for

man—and we have the meanest possible character. Yet such was the one to whom this widow came for assistance. What could she expect? In her disposition, in her feelings, in her ideas of life and in her judgments of right and wrong, she was infinitely removed from the judge, the man from whom she sought justice. Considering the character of the judge and the nature of the case presented to him by the widow, it was hardly possible that she could even hope for any favors. The only avenue to his heart—if he possessed such an organ—was through his own selfishness. If it could be so arranged that in any way his selfish purposes could be accommodated by granting the widow's request, he would most certainly do so. But aside from selfishness there was absolutely no appeal. The bringing together of these two characters reduces to an absolute minimum the probabilities of any favorable intervention on the part of the judge. Perhaps nothing would so utterly disgust this judge as a poor, helpless widow with some petty complaint against an unkind, imposing neighbor.

She was very far beneath his notice, and her business affairs in no sense worthy of his dignity. But nothing so effectually closed the door against her as the character of the man. Were he a man of principle or heart or conscience, she might at least hope for the right thing. Yet with all these things against her, she not only went bravely on, but she obtained the desired favor, simply on the ground that the judge feared he might be worried by her repeated coming.

Christ takes this extreme case—and yet perhaps not an unusual occurrence in that country—to encourage believers in coming to God for help and blessings. To do this with the best possible effect, he introduces a third party, and then a fourth—God, and God's own chosen people. God is over against the unjust judge, and God's chosen and specially beloved are put over against the widow. Now, says Christ, if that unjust judge granted the widow's request, will not God hear his own when they call on him? Here the argument is stated and the form of the logic is given. Now it will

be readily seen that the whole force of the argument—the point of the lesson—is in the contrasts between the persons represented. Between the unjust judge and God on the one hand, and between the widow and God's chosen ones on the other hand. These contrasts are, in both cases, as great as can be made. The unjust judge is the very personification of depraved humanity, from whom absolutely nothing favorable can be expected. Selfishness is the one law of his being and all his actions. On the other hand is God, the personification of all that is good and merciful and kind. The being of God is the very climax of infinite perfection, and the law of his actions is the sum total of mercy and benevolence. Now, if this judge, a man of such character, will grant to the most unwelcome suppliant her request simply on the ground of his own selfishness, will not God, the law of whose actions is mercy, grant the requests of those whom he loves best, whom he has chosen to be his own favored ones, those whom he has bidden to come and ask, and to whom he has made every

form of promise? Will he not hear these when they cry to him in their distress?

Only one answer is possible to this question which Christ himself asks. The logic is absolutely conclusive and invincible. A negative conclusion is not even thinkable. The opposite characters of the two personages here makes the conclusion absolutely in favor of the believer. We do not see how the argument could be strengthened nor the conclusion made more favorable to the Christian. Then Christ's own strong assertion, "I tell you he will hear them speedily," gives additional assurance.

But this is only half the argument. There is another contrast that is equally as great, and quite as favorable to the believer as the one already considered. This contrast is between the widow coming to the unjust judge, on the one hand, and the Christian coming to God, on the other hand. As everything is unfavorable to the widow in her coming with her petition to the unjust judge—unfavorable to the utmost degree—so everything is favorable to the believer in coming to God—favorable in every

particular. Nothing could be added to make the one case more hopeless nor the other more favorable.

Note some of the points of contrast between the widow and the believer. These will show the magnitude of Christ's argument and the force and beauty of the illustration:

1. The first contrast is in the coming. The widow in coming had no one to plead her cause for her before the judge. She must depend upon herself alone. She is her own lawyer, her own witness. She is totally ignorant of every legal process or business. In her ignorance she must go and make the best of it. All this in the presence of this unjust judge only enhanced her embarrassment and her difficulties. She must plead her own case as best she can. On the other hand, the believer in coming to God assumes quite a different attitude. He does not come in his own name, nor plead his own case. God has provided for the believer a name that is all prevailing; an intercessor whom God himself has pledged always to hear in behalf of the Christian. The

believer has Christ to present his petitions before God and to intercede for him. Even when the believer is so weak and unworthy that he cannot present his case rightly before God, the divine Advocate pleads with unutterable tenderness and sympathy. The court of heaven has appointed Christ as our Advocate, not to condemn us, not to search out objections, but to plead our cause, so as to make it as favorable as possible for us. What a wretched farce was the court into which the widow went, nameless and unrepresented, to claim her legal rights at the hands of a godless wretch who was acting the part of a judge of the law. What a magnificent spectacle, on the other hand, when we see the believer approaching—not the seat of judgment, but the throne of grace, surmounted by the Judge of all the earth who can but do the right—and the believer supported in his claims by the all-prevailing Son of God, the advocate and intercessor, who, in his appeal, challenges the very name of the judge, for whose glory alone the claim is made. The contrast is infinite. All

is in favor of the believer. In the case of the widow there is nothing but the feeble plea of an unknown, inexperienced woman. In the case of the Christian the very name is linked with that of the Son of God, and is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life.

2. There is another respect in which there is a very marked contrast between the widow in coming to the judge and the believer coming to Christ. The judge had absolutely no interest in the affairs of the widow. It was of no consequence to him what were the issues involved. There was no money consideration in the case, and, having no regard for man, it is scarcely possible that he was interested in the general welfare of the widow. So she could make no appeal to him on that ground. The personal interests of the widow and those of the judge were as far removed as could be conceived. Is it so with the believer when he comes to God with his petitions? Judging from the actions and progress of many Christians it would seem that they really think God has no interest in them in any sense. There

are, however, two things we must consider as opposed to this idea.

First—God is certainly interested in the believer personally, in every one regardless of their obscurity, their position in life or monetary standing. God cares in the kindliest manner for all his followers. This is abundantly demonstrated by what he has done in our salvation. Grace is only another word for true and whole-hearted interest in men, and especially those whom we love. God is more interested in us than we are in ourselves—more than we can be—in behalf of both our souls and our bodies. Our daily bread and even the very hairs of our head are cared for by him, according to Christ's teachings.

Second—God has the greatest possible interest in the work in which believers are engaged, especially if we are faithfully serving him. It is all only his own work, and the work in which he has manifested the greatest possible interest, and for which he has made the greatest sacrifice. Hence, when the believer goes to God in prayer concerning any part of

the great work to be accomplished by the church on earth, it is only asking God to bless his own interests, to advance his own kingdom on earth. However much we may be personally interested in the welfare of the church and the salvation of souls, God is still more concerned.

3. A third contrast between the widow and the believer is in the relationship sustained by the clients to their respective advocates—the widow to the judge, and the believer to God. Had the widow been connected with the judge or related to him in any way whatever, she might have approached him with some assurance of obtaining favor. But she was in every respect a stranger. No blood kin and no marriage relation existed, nor even the slightest personal acquaintance. Hence she was as far removed as possible from the one to whom she looked for relief.

How different it is on the part of the believer. He is not only not a stranger to God, but the closest possible relationship exists between him and God. God is the believer's

Father in the truest and highest sense, while God ever speaks of him as his son in the most affectionate and peculiar manner. Jesus Christ the Christian's advocate is only an elder brother. So the believer comes to God his Father through Christ his own brother. This fact makes it a moral impossibility for the believer to fail in obtaining the desired favors. While on the part of the widow it is practically a moral impossibility for her to win her case.

From this series of contrasts between God and the unjust judge, and between the believer and the widow the full force of the argument appears. The argument is of the strongest logical form, from the less to the greater, or, rather, from the least to the greatest. Only one conclusion is morally and logically possible. If the unjust judge will grant the request of the widow is it not certain that God will hear his own when they cry to him? If the worst man will do that which is most unlikely and most against his own inclination, will not the best and most benevolent Being do that which is most in the line of his work and

character, and which lies nearest to his heart? Add to these considerations all the promises God has made to the believer and the numerous invitations to come with all the cares and troubles of life, and the illustration becomes still more striking and the argument more forcible and conclusive. The widow had not the shadow of a promise for anything except to be rejected. For the believer there is every conceivable form of promise and the removal of all difficulties that may come up.

But what can there be in the conduct of this nameless woman for each one of us? Aside from the argument already developed, there must be something in the woman herself worthy of consideration. Like some of the other nameless immortals, there is something in her own actions that makes her an example for believers, otherwise Christ would not have placed her in this remarkable group. From Christ's words we find there was something in this woman herself that gave her the victory, and that same principle is essential to the success of every believer.

1. The widow went—in the face of every disadvantage and discouragement. She still went to the judge with her case. She did not faint nor give up. It would have been very easy for her just to abandon all effort and become submerged with the moral weaklings. How many faint-hearted Christians there are in the church. In spite of all the provisions God has made, and the numerous promises in his word, there are still so many that say, "It is of no use." Christians will not even go to God, they will not even go to God's house and use the means that God has provided. The wonder is not that the church does not progress more rapidly in the conquest of the world, but that she lives at all. No other enterprise on earth could exist, much less prosper, with as little effort and as much faint-heartedness as there is in the church of Jesus Christ.

2. This widow had in her heart a fixed determination not to fail in her purpose. Not to be repulsed by the judge, however unfavorable he might be to her case. A fixed determination to succeed is nine-tenths of the battle. Things

won without requiring determination to obtain them are usually worth but little. The will power, the strong desire form the backbone of true character, are the secret of success. Pray and not faint—continue without the least thought of yielding. How this characteristic manifested itself in the conduct of this widow.

3. This determined purpose gave her strength for the struggle—for her repeated coming, to ask and ask again. It was exceedingly trying and humiliating to be treated as she was by the judge. But as he had no regard for man, utterly devoid of principle, her only policy could be to wear out his patience, so that it would become a matter of self-defense for him to grant her request—to literally wear him out. This required all the energy of her being. At last the question with him was how to get rid of her. And the easiest way was to grant her request.

4. This widow certainly realized a sense of utter dependence upon the judge. There was no one else to whom she could go for help. She must have relief in some way. But she

was dependent upon this man and this means alone, and she must prevail.

All of these characteristics are essential to the life and work of the believer, yet how little are these graces and principles developed, and how weak and unaggressive is the church.

One other important thought is expressed by Christ in this illustration that solves some of the greatest difficulties on the part of Christians coming to God for blessings. Why does God tarry so long? Christ says he will hear, though he may tarry long with them. It is this tarrying that so often confuses and discourages the Christian in his work. And how can it be true that God will hear speedily, and yet tarry long? To hear speedily does not mean to hear and answer immediately. Even speed may require time to accomplish the work. He bears long with them, not because he is unwilling to grant the blessing sought, but in order to test the metal of the client, and to develop true character and manliness. Sometimes it requires a long continued process to bring the believer to the point when it is

even proper and safe to grant the blessing sought. But that point once reached, the blessing will not tarry—it then comes speedily. The long-bearing is that which prepares the soul for the coming issue. It intensifies the desire, strengthens determination, and intensifies every effort of the soul, and brings it to the true realization of helplessness. So it may be that the struggle in obtaining is a greater blessing in the end than the thing sought. In this struggle there is developed the egoistic idea so important in the true character—the idea that I must accomplish it. The personality and feeling of responsibility in all the affairs of life. The widow had no one to do for her. But this only made her stronger and more self-reliant.

The giant thoughts in this beautiful illustration are plainly these:

1. The contrasts already developed, culminating in the expression of Christ: "If the unjust judge will hear, will not God?"

2. The absolute assertion of Christ: "I tell you he will hear his own when they cry."

3. The continued, uncompromising, importunity of the widow—"her continual coming."

4. The comforting explanation to the weary struggling—"Though he bear long with them."

This nameless woman has become one of the brightest stars in the constellation. She demonstrates to the Christian how the richest prizes are won, and to the church how her most brilliant victories are to be achieved. Though nameless here, she wears the victor's crown, and has written upon her Christ's new name, and has received the white stone with the name engraven on it which no one knows but the one who receives it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WIDOW'S JOY.

"Jesus drew near to Nain, as from the gate
The funeral came forth. * * *
'Weep not,' he said. Then, taking the cold hand,
He said, 'Arise!' And instantly the breast
Heaved in its cerements, and a sudden flush
Ran through the lines of the divided lips,
And, with a murmur of his mother's name,
He trembled and sat upright in his shroud."

—N. P. Willis.

One day ago the great Wonder Worker was twenty miles to the northeast at Capernaum at the northwest upper end of the sea of Galilee. Capernaum appears to have been the home of the mother of Jesus and her family from about the time of the marriage in Cana in Galilee. Hence Christ was frequently there, and taught much in their synagogue and wrought many miracles. Consequently Capernaum was more highly favored in this way than any town in Galilee.

Upon this occasion he healed the Roman Centurion's servant, a miracle illustrating the remarkable faith of the Centurion. Some time in the afternoon of this day he left Capernaum going in a southwestern direction through the hill country of Galilee towards Endor, immortalized as the home of the witch to whom King Saul resorted in his distress the night before his disgraceful and tragic death.

They pass by Endor and onward to "Little Hermon," a few miles to the southwest, in the northeast corner of which is the little town of Nain, made famous by the resurrection of the widow's son. Nain was then a town of considerable importance. Located on the end of Hermon it could be seen for many miles around, and so was really a "city set on a hill that could not be hid," and this eventful visit of Christ has indeed made it a city that cannot be hid even from the most distant corners of the earth—wherever is told the sweet old story of Jesus. Nain is now scarcely more than a cluster of ruins, but still enough remains to

mark the place of the ancient city. The only inhabitants are a few families of Moslems. East of the town are many ancient tombs, some of which doubtless antedate by many centuries the time of Christ. It was no doubt in the direction of this necropolis that the funeral procession was moving when Christ and his disciples met them just outside the city gate.

Christ's little band were just in time to meet the solemnly moving train as it was going to the burying grounds. The procession was large, but without style and pomp, for it was the only son of a widow, presumably very poor. The body was being carried to the tomb, followed by the widowed mother and a large concourse of sympathizing friends. What is more pathetic than the home of a widow—a home bereft of its head and its support; where the most sacred tie has been severed by the scythe of cruel death, where the heartstrings have been broken, and the fondest hopes blasted. Mourning and bereavement have taken the place of cheer and comfort. The

cheerful wife has become a sorrowful widow. The long veil now hides the once sunny, smiling face, and the bright eye is dimmed with bitterest tears. What all this really means no one may ever know save those in whose homes it becomes a sad reality—a personal experience. To them it means infinitely more than words can ever express. But happy is even that widow who has a son—a son indeed on whom may fall at least some of the burdens and responsibilities of the departed father. Alas, how many sons are not sons indeed, only by birth. And instead of being the support of the mother and the source of her comfort, they bring nothing but constant worry.

There was in this home a son, an only son, and presumably an only child, and, judging from the large number that were following in the luneral procession, he was an honored young man—one who was indeed a son to his mother. As the father was no more, the cords of the mother's love had fastened more closely around his heart. And as he became the support of the little family of two, the fond

mother felt more and more her dependence on him, and that in some measure he was able to take the place of the father. The broken heart of the bereft mother was partially healed by the devoted and faithful son, and once more they had a comfortable support. The son loves the mother only the more as he feels that he is her only support, and the mother has learned as never before the real value of a noble son. To cheer and encourage him she hid and choked her grief until some of the sweetness of her former smiles returned to her face.

But alas, dire disease again enters the quiet little home, and this time the son is prostrated. Stalwart and healthy he seemed to defy disease. But day by day it fastens more firmly its hold upon his vitals, and ere long he is prostrated to rise no more. Death again knocks at the door, this time to claim the only son. Is not the demand even more cruel than before? The mother and son had just recovered sufficiently from the former stroke to catch a breath of life. But the unrelenting

monster turns not aside, nor lingers in accomplishing his purpose. When once his icy clutch has throttled his victim the struggle soon ends. Let him once lay his cold hand on the warm, beating heart and very soon the life-flow is clogged and the pulse decreases and stops. Thus he stalked boldly into the widow's home.

The worst has come and the stout son is dead. The dark pall settles there once more, and thicker and lower than before, and seemingly nevermore to be lifted. Kind friends prepare the body for the burial, while the childless, widowed mother sobs in the bitterness of despair. The last ray of hope vanished in the death of her child, and for her the sun has set never again to rise. Comfort under this double affliction is impossible and her grief knows no bound. The time has come when the body must be removed and laid in its last resting place.

The funeral procession leaves the little home, now a solitary vacant house. Just around the foot of Little Hermon, on the road

towards Endor about half a mile distant, we see another procession moving towards the town. The bier is gently carried through the little town while the weeping mother follows close behind. The hearts of the stoutest are touched, and eyes that had forgotten how to weep were jeweled with sympathetic tears as the widow's son was borne out. How many others could have been better spared from the community, and none would have been so much missed at his home.

Quietly they pass through, and a large concourse of people fall in line before they reach the eastern gate leading to the burying grounds. They have just passed out through the gate of the city and behold! they meet the other procession advancing towards the gate. Apparently they have come a considerable distance on foot. The leader of this little band may possibly be recognized by some who were going out from the city. He may have visited there before in his journeys through Galilee, but this visit only for certain purposes is recorded; or he may have been a

stranger to them. It is, however, morally certain that they had heard of the wonder-workings of Christ, for his fame had gone out through all the region round about. Whether there was in the mind of Christ or elsewhere any previous arrangement for this meeting we may not even conjecture.

At all events Christ instantly took in the situation. He saw that it was a funeral procession, and from the appearance of those that followed closest the bier, he could easily understand that one—a lone woman—was the chief mourner—she was a widow. His heart was instantly moved with compassion. Could it have been otherwise with him who came to bind up the broken hearted and bring joy where there is the bitterness of sorrow? What an infinitude of comfort and blessing there is in the compassion of Jesus. It is not a meaningless, intangible sympathy, but it is a compassion that materializes in actual blessings for the sufferer. This compassion is the motive power in bestowing all the benefits of redemption—temporal and spiritual. What

would the world do were it not for the mercy, the compassion of Jesus?

As the two processions meet there is a pause. Jesus is the first to speak, and his words were addressed to the heartbroken mother. To comfort her was his first purpose. But was not this strange language to one who could but weep, for whom there was no comfort? But was there not the expression of hope and promise in the very tones of his voice as he spoke these words to the disconsolate mother? It is not the stoic comfort he would give, but the comfort based on the assurance of immediate relief. He speaks only a word. There is no explanation, no argument. There never should be when Christ speaks. Much of the comfort of Christ's teaching is lost by explaining and arguing and doubting. Simply rest on his word, there is the comfort. There was here no delay; he spoke the word of comfort to the mother, and immediately advanced to the bier where was the body of the young man.

The pall-bearers stop as he approaches.

There is no command, a sign is enough. Instantly all becomes quiet as death itself. What is going to take place? Hearts beat faster and bosoms heave with anxious expectation. The mother's sobs are smothered in obedience to the Savior's gentle words. What a moment this must have been to the mother; what a struggle in her heart. But it was of short duration. He gently touches the bier, and when all has become quiet, he utters the resurrection words: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

Strange language to deaf ears, a singular command to a lifeless body! But these words carry in them all the power and authority of the Creator who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast. Grim death at once slackened his grip and released his prey, and the soul is re-embodied and the body quickened. All in a moment, in the catching of a breath, and the young man is alive again, and in the full possession of all his mental and physical powers. He immediately sat up and began to speak.

The resurrection words are worthy of special note. The egoistic personality appears. "I say unto thee." There was no appeal to any higher power. In the speaker was vested all the power and authority to raise the dead. In this particular the miracles of Christ differ from those performed by his disciples and others, they wrought not in their own name nor by their own power, but only in the name of Christ. Christ works in his own name and by his own power.

What were the first words of the resurrected young man, the record does not show. Imagine the thrill that must have gone through the lookers-on when they saw the dead body move, the breast heave, the eyes open, and the body rising to a sitting posture, and then the lips begin to move in the utterance of words. With another strain of the imagination try to gain some faint idea of the anxiety of the mother at the moment when the pall bearers halted, through the moments of painful silence as the Savior touched the bier—the divine hand so near her beloved dead. Was there not already

a beam of hope? Was there not mingled fear and joy as she heard the resurrection command from the lips of the Son of God, and then the bewildering ecstasy of joy when she heard the familiar voice of her son speaking, full of life and love—that voice which but yesterday was hopelessly hushed in death? Could she realize, or even believe all this? Are not her ears mistaken and her tear-bedimmed eyes seeing a vision?

But the work is accomplished beyond all possibility of dispute or deception. There is the living, breathing body which all may see, and there is the audible voice speaking intelligently words which all may hear. The divine Healer gently draws the astonished mother close to the bier and presents her son alive again. It is almost more than she can yet believe. But the sitting posture, the luster in the eye, the face so well known in every feature, the familiar voice with all its tenderness and accents quickly dispel all doubts. Her joy is ineffably full and her tears flow afresh. but this time it is the tear of joy and gratitude.

The glory of heaven is rainbowed in each tear gem as she feels the heart of her son throbbing with new life, and sees the spark restored to the once glazed eye, and hears joyous words from the lips which but an hour ago were cold as marble and on which was imprinted the long farewell kiss. The rose tint is returning to the cheek, and the familiar smile of recognition plays sweetly upon his face. The surrounding crowd look on in profound astonishment. A strange feeling of awe and fear fills their souls as they see this wonderful manifestation of divine power. It was never so seen before, and the fame rapidly spreads through all the region round about. But let us turn again for a moment to the scene of the miracle at the gate of Nain.

The wondering and rejoicing multitude eagerly look on as the young man descends from the bier, and with his overjoyed mother leads the procession back into the city, not with heads bowed in sorrow and grief, but with shouts of rejoicing and praise to God. It is no longer a funeral train, but a triumphal

resurrection march, such as had never been witnessed in all the strange episodes in human history. The mother returns to her home not all alone as she had pictured to her mind but an hour ago when the dead body of her son was carried out. But she is supremely happy in the embrace of him in whose death her last hope had vanished.

Home again together, alive and well. What an evening that must have been to the mother and son; an experience of which we can form but little conception. Imagine how the fond mother prepared a savory meal—such as a mother alone can prepare—for her now doubly prized and thrice loved son, restored to her bosom from the cold embrace of death. Did mother ever prepare a supper with so thankful a heart, with love that so heaved the bosom and tingled to the fingers' ends? As they sat around their little board that evening, were hearts ever more thankful or faces abeam with brighter joy? How sweetly the evening passed away. How this remarkable event endeared mother and son as never before. Life was be-

gun anew on a higher plane and with new and nobler conceptions of God and of humanity. This experience was worth all of life to them. Here was a vision of God such as they will not have again until the glorious resurrection morning when not only this young man, but all of God's redeemed, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and "come forth." What an earnest this of that other and greater resurrection day! What a proof that Jesus the Son of Man has absolute power, even over death and all its terrors. Here is one ray of the divine glory that penetrates the shadow of death.

How will it be on that glorious morning when the brightness of the coming Redeemer shall appear and the shadow of death shall roll away like the sable robe of night before the rising sun? There will be present not only a mother and a funeral procession to see the climactic miracle of the resurrection, but all humanity will hear and see and feel the thrill of new life.

This little family—the widow and her son

—were living as it were in a new realm. But the transition to this higher plane was through an exceedingly dark valley and a heart-rending trial. This is usually the case. Christ passed through Gethsemane to the cross, and from the cross through the tomb before he ascended in glory to the right hand of God. So for us the road upwards is often through the dark and gloomy shadows through which the strong hand of Christ alone can safely pilot us. But he always leads us up higher. Through the valley we scale the sunlit mountain beyond. How Christ changed this little home from the blackness of darkness and sorrow to light and joy. What a joy to the mother's heart and what an experience to the young man. But the power of this miracle is not exhausted in its performance. Here are rich blessings and beautiful lessons for all of us.

1. Christ meets all of us as we pass on in the journey of life. Often when the last hope has just vanished and we are ready to give up in utter despair, he appears in some form to us for our relief. Let us ever remember that

Christ need not stand before us in his incarnate human form in order to meet us. He reveals himself in many ways, and operates through various means, but it is none the less Christ. When he sent forth his disciples to preach and to heal he said to them: "He that heareth you heareth me—he that receiveth you receiveth me—he that rejecteth you rejecteth me." He meets us in his providence in our everyday lives. He meets us in our intercourse with our fellow men. He meets us in the quiet hour when we are all alone. And especially does he meet us when we are in our Gethsemanes of sorrow and trial. Perhaps the greatest difficulty with us is to recognize him when we meet him. We would rather believe it to be anyone else than Christ. How hard it is to recognize Christ when we are discouraged and cast down, and just in the act of burying our last hope. But just then Christ is most likely to appear. God appeared to Abraham when he was just in the act of slaying his son—his only hope.

2. To each one of us Christ will say as he

did to the sorrowful widow—"Weep not." And these words have for us the same promise and hope as they were intended to convey to the heart of the widow. He has come to bind up the broken-hearted—are we broken-hearted? He has come to give joy for sorrow—does this include our sorrowful hearts? When in sorrow and trial, let us attentively listen for the comforting words of Christ. He is nearer than we may think.

3. Christ will do for all homes just what he did for this little home. He will give back the young men from sin and death. Oh, how many homes are sad, not because the young men—the sons—have been carried through the gate to the burying grounds, but because they are under the dominion of sin and vice, and are on the way to ruin and death. How many mothers' hearts are broken because their sons are lost beyond all human hope, but the saving power of Christ. How many are restored while the mothers follow with their tears and prayers.

4. Christ will give joy to all homes as he

did to the home of the widow. Is there any home as happy as the home where every son has been brought back alive and well? As the dewdrop reflects the starry firmament, so these homes are miniature heavens. Christ ever and anon comes our way, passes our gates and would gladly enter our homes to bring joy and blessings.

5. How common, and yet how important are the two classes represented in this picture—the widows and the sons. Every village has its widows, and almost every home has its young men. The widows are the weakest, and most helpless and dependent; the young men are the strongest and most hopeful. They are the strength and power of our nation. What is Christ to our young men, and what are our young men without Christ? Only as they have heard the quickening voice of the Son of God and experienced the thrill of the new life can they truly fill their great mission, whether it be in the home or in the great affairs of the nation, of society and of the church.

The poor widow of Nain is nameless here forever. She is remembered only by her once coming in touch with Christ. And not only is she immortalized, but the little town on the slope of Hermon will be sacred in the memories of all who love the story of Jesus. We are glad there was a widow in Nain and that she had a son.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WIDOW'S MITE—OR THE WEIGHT OF A FARTHING.

"Two mites, two drops, yet all her house and land,
Fall from a steady heart, though trembling hand.
The other's wanton wealth foams high and brave;
The other cast away,—she only gave."

—Richard Crasham.

The life and labors of the blessed Son of God on earth were almost at an end. This was the last week of his ministry before his crucifixion. It was the last day of his ministry, and this afternoon was his last visit to the temple in Jerusalem, and there late in the even he delivered his last sermon. This was a most searching and powerful address, in which he stoutly and unsparingly condemned the Scribes and Pharisees and unbelievers in general.

His enemies had all day been on a sharp lookout for some clue to his accusation and arrest. Every word as it fell from his lips

was criticised and twisted so as to pervert it if possible. They were intent upon his life by any means whatever. Justice had already suffered crucifixion at their hands, and mercy was to them an unknown virtue. Envy ruled supreme in their hearts, and hatred armed with cruelty was eager to nail the Son of God to the cross.

This day the traitor Judas had made the bargain for thirty pieces of silver to betray the Christ into the hands of his enemies. Avarice becomes the handmaiden to envy to accomplish her hellish purpose. In the evening of this day as Christ was leaving the temple for the last time forever, as he still stood on the steps of the porch and looked out over the city, he stretched forth his hands and wept, and uttered those inimitably sweet and pathetic, and yet awfully solemn words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." This was the pronouncing of the final doom, the farewell malediction on

that godforsaken city. Nothing now remained but impending doom. The judgment was fixed and the death sentence pronounced.

As Christ and his disciples were going out toward Bethany immediately after leaving the temple, they sat on the slope of the Mount of Olives and he foretold the approaching and final ruin of the then magnificent city. The sun was just then setting over the western hills of Judea and his last rays imprinted a farewell kiss on the glittering pinnacles of an eternally condemned city. At the same moment the blessed Son of God was departing from the city and giving it over to fatal and damnable unbelief. The glorious Sun of Righteousness was also just at that moment setting never more to rise with his healing beams upon that once blessed and splendid, but now anathematized town. She had committed the sin for which there is no forgiveness in this world nor in that world which is to come.

This had been a most momentous day—a day the like of which had never been in all

the history of the world. It was the winding up of the greatest life that ever was lived on earth, and it was lifting the curtain for the greatest tragedy in all history. It was the last offering of mercy to a desperately wicked people, and the deliberate preparation for the commission of the greatest crime humanity can perpetrate.

But perhaps the most beautiful and instructive thing that occurred during this last day of our Savior's public ministry has not been here mentioned. Some time during the day Christ was sitting in the temple over against the treasury, the place where the money offerings were deposited. Many came to put in their freewill offerings to the Lord, the rich and the poor together, for here all have like privileges. Each gave as his heart prompted. Some doubtless gave large amounts and with good intent. Some came in great pomp and style, desiring to be noticed by those that were thronging the temple. Christ seems to have carefully watched the performance for some time. His penetrating eye had accurate-

ly sized up every one that had come in, and counted unerringly every offering made. He had counted not only the number of mites and farthings, but he also calculated infallibly the motive, the true spiritual value of every gift, and the result was then publicly announced to the givers and all present. How interesting it would be to have such a report read after each collection that is taken in our churches! Might it not increase our collections and make them more acceptable than all the unhallowed schemes now used? But is not just such a record really kept and by the same infallible Recorder, who will some day read the result?

But the one that attracted the attention of Christ more than all the others was not one of the imposing figures that moved pompously in to deposit his gift, desiring to be observed by the crowd. To be seen of men seems to be one of the weaknesses of our unsanctified nature. But here one comes who, if noticed at all, was noticed to be avoided. She bears the marks of toil and sorrow; she is clad with the

garments of one who has not much of this world's goods, but withal she is tidy and clean, and her whole appearance and bearing show that there is within a noble and humble spirit. It is quite evident that she is not in the enjoyment of even the necessaries of life, and that she has a double portion of life's cares and burdens. She not only labors for her daily maintenance, but her toils earn for her only a very scanty support. Each day's earnings is scarcely enough to provide for the constantly returning wants of herself and her dependent little ones. It is late in the afternoon and she has just completed a hard day's labor in some busy, dirty mart, or in the employ of some wealthy firm where the work is slavish and unremitting and the pay so small that the proprietors must first murder their consciences before they can count out the microscopic wages to their overworked employees.

In this particular case it was two mites, making one farthing. This little sum was all she had to sustain life that night and the

coming day. As she wends her way toward her humble home, tired and hungry, she passes by the temple, and she is suddenly reminded that she has not deposited her offering to the Lord, the weekly tithe of her very small income. But how can she pay anything when she has only this for both her offering and her living? Shall she divide the very small hard earned sum and give only part of what is due the Lord's treasury and save part for herself and family, live on half of her already too scanty rations? That would look hard indeed. That would far surpass all ordinary sacrifice for the cause of Christ. How many who profess to be consistent Christians and have a hundred fold greater income than this woman, excuse themselves from giving anything at all to the Lord. But this woman does not seem to debate the matter for a single moment as to whether she shall give, or how much, but, humbly and almost stealthily, passes in and gives the whole amount that is due, which takes all her living, the whole day's wages. Perhaps a few crusts at home

are all that is left for her sustenance until another day's work is done.

Penniless and hungry she hastens home, bearing no bundles, no provisions, but with a conscience void of offense, and wearing a glorious yet invisible crown placed on her brow by the very hand of the Son of God. Why has she thus robbed herself of her living to give to the Lord his portion? Was it just to keep up an appearance and to be doing as others do? It would have been very dearly bought style. Would not observers who knew her stringent circumstances scoffingly remark that she had better save her mites for the daily needs of her family? Would they not call it mock piety that takes the bread out of the very mouths of the hungry children to pay the Lord's tithe? Would not even the most pious say that it was no part of her duty to rob herself of the necessaries of life to give to the church? So the very best people talk—even now.

And after all what does her offering amount to? Her giving or withholding does not af-

fect the sum-total in the least. How people do constantly ply this argument to quiet their conscience on the subject of giving. It is difficult to determine which is the most detestable in the sight of the Lord, the poor man who is too proud to give anything because he cannot give a big, showy sum, or the rich Pharisee who gives a large, handsome offering, just to keep up an appearance. Weighed by the proud, wealthy Pharisee, the widow's offering is altogether lighter than vanity. He despises not only the insignificant amount, but he scorns the person who has given it. To the proud poor man this widow is nothing but a stark fool to pinch herself to keep up with wealthier people and support a rich church. But we may be thankful that we are not to be judged by those who see only outwardly, and measure things only by their external or physical size. In the minds of some such a narrow minded, sarcastical criticism is the guide in forming an estimate, regardless of all justice.

But there is one who sees the motives.

There is a pair of balances so sensitive that they are moved by the least purpose of the human soul. These balances are in the hand of an impartial judge who never misreads the result. These are the balances that are used in determining the real value of every thing that is done for Christ, whether it be done by the rich Pharisee or the menial servant. While the Son of God watched this collection as it progressed, each gift was promptly and correctly weighed. There were no mistakes in this work. It is precisely so with everything we do for Christ now, whether it be giving money, or worship, or any other service we can render to him. In the weighing of our gifts to the Lord, three things are considered that enter into the make-up of their value:

First, the actual size of the gift, the real money value we place on it.

Second, the relative value, its relative size as compared with the amount possessed by the giver as his regular income.

Third, the motive in giving it.

The first of these is least to be considered. In fact we do not know whether the Lord cares anything at all for the actual size of these gifts, beyond that they express our real motives and measure the degree and character of our love for him. It is his method and his glory to bring great results out of small human or visible means and in this way manifest his divine hand in the accomplishment of his work. We have remarkable illustrations of this principle in the case of Samson slaying a thousand with the jawbone of an ass, the three hundred under Gideon defeating the thousands of the Midianites, the feeding of the five thousand with the five loaves and two fishes; and so very often in ancient and in modern Christian history.

The relative size of the gift regulates the external form of giving. The gifts are to be according as the Lord has prospered us. As he gives to us, so must we give to him in return. In this widow's case the utmost limit was reached in this requirement. She gave all of her living. Hence the relative size of

her gift was larger than that of any one else who contributed at that time. She could not have done more. So in this respect her offering was of the highest order. And judging from Christ's verdict the widow's motive in giving was as pure as the amount was relatively large, for if the inner form of the giving was faulty, it would have invalidated all. Paul says: "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor and have not charity—the true inner principle, character, motive—it profiteth me nothing." It is the motive, the soul character in giving, and, in all, service to Christ that gives it value.

Did Christ linger in the temple on this the last evening of his public ministry in order to select and give to us a genuine example and illustration of right-giving? If so, should we not most carefully study this remarkable character and her action that made her the subject for this most important precept of Christ? The advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world and the right development of Christian character depend perhaps more

upon right-giving to the Lord than any one thing in the whole compass of Christian duty. This rightly done would at once bring into active play all the monetary and spiritual powers of the church, as well as the activity necessary to accomplish the work. The withholding of these gifts makes all the vast wealth of the church nothing but latent force at best, and at the same time fatally dwarfs and paralyzes the spiritual personality of the church.

So far as we are able to see there was no prearranged plan on the part of Christ for this occasion. This woman was doubtless a stranger to him, and perhaps to all that came in. Each one came in his own way and time and made his offering. They had often been there for the same purpose. Precisely the same thing may have occurred every week, or at least on each great preparation day. So what took place on this occasion was only a bit of every day life among those people. Only on that day Christ was sitting over against the treasury and taking note of the

offerings as they were put in. Christ only gives us a vitascopic picture of the scene, and brings into play the X rays which show us the true character of the givers. The immortal heroine of the occasion is this unknown woman—known only by her offering to the Lord, and not indeed by the magnitude of her gift, but by the spirit of the giver. She is the model giver, and as such alone she is immortalized by the impartial judge. And just as she is immortalized by Christ, so is she also made the model for all right giving. What are some of the thoughts suggested by this remarkable character?

1. This case was so selected as to be of universal application in the Christian world. She is a perfect example to all, regardless of wealth or rank. A very rich person able to give largely would not have answered the purpose. All poorer people could at once say that it is impossible for them to imitate the rich giver. A person of moderate circumstances could not have served as a universal model. It must be one whom all can imi-

tate perfectly, from the most indigent to the most lucrative. But such a model can be found only in one who has certain essential characteristics, as is true of all perfect models. There must be extreme poverty, a subsistence upon the smallest possible income, and that income earned by constant daily toil. Thus every mite is a sacrifice and every farthing a day's living. Every offering to the Lord is taking bread from the mouth or clothes from the back, and is felt in the keenest manner by the giver.

Second, there must be the right state of heart in the giving. It is the heart and not the hand that gives truly. Until this is the character of the giving the largest gifts numerically are totally worthless to the Lord. And third, the giving must be to the utmost ability of the giver. What she gave was all she had and all she could command. All she had that day and all she had any day. She never had on hand more than one day's earnings, and it was impossible for her to lay up from one day to another. So she went

literally to the utmost of her ability. Now if we combine these characteristics we have a perfectly ideal giver, and one that all may understand and imitate.

Here is the great divine law of giving. Let this be the law of the church, and of every individual member, and there will no longer be any lack of funds in the treasury of the Lord's house, and the cause of Christ will languish no more. But how is the church to come up to this divinely selected model? Was the collection that Christ so carefully observed in the temple a fair sample of what he sees in our churches every Sabbath day?

2. The woman gave what was due to the Lord, regardless of how much others gave, or how much was needed by the church. This principle is of the utmost importance. The two rules that regulate givers generally are, first, how much do others give, and second, how much is needed, or rather, how much will at all answer the purpose. It is surprising how few give as the Lord prospers them, regardless of how much others do, and

regardless of how much may be needed for any particular purpose. But neither of these considerations can in any sense measure what I owe to the Lord. I owe him as he prospers and blesses me, no matter what others may do. If we give only as others give, we allow other men to rule our conscience in the matter, and our giving, as also all of our religious services will become nothing more than a mechanical imitation of others. And if we attempt to give only as we suppose there may be present need, we are apt to reduce the demand to smallest possible minimum. Says God: "Bring ye in all the tithes and offerings," then the windows of heaven will be opened to us. How the church does rob itself of the richest blessings of heaven by withholding from God the gifts—the real debts—due him. How easy it is to quiet the conscience by flattering ourselves that we give as much as others, and that we have given our share of the stingy amount the congregation agrees to give to some special purpose.

But yet how false is all such easily purchased peace.

3. Just as Christ that afternoon sat and observed the ordinary doings of the common mass of people in this particular performance to determine the character of their doings, so he now observes the every day affairs of men and determines their true value. And he not only observes, but he infallibly records these transactions. Does not this same Christ observe the daily buying and selling in our business houses? It is this common, every-day business that indicates the true character of men. It is not the special occasions that show the real character of the man and his deeds so much as his daily habit of life. Any one may make a fine appearance once in a great while, or do a noble deed under special circumstances. But these do not demonstrate true character. There are very few persons who will not put on extra touches under unusual circumstances, or when they think there is a probability of being observed by those in authority. How careful is the cashier of a

bank when he thinks there is danger of the examiner dropping in. How diligent are the employees when the boss is expected! This is a remarkable weakness in human nature. How Christ praises the servant that diligently and faithfully serves from true love and principle, and not from fear of being observed. Do men realize that Christ is noting all we do, and that these every-day things make up the sum-total of our lives? Hence Christ has taught us to do all things as unto the Lord and not as unto man. And hence the teachings of Christ must guide us, rather than the customs of men. Make this the great law of life, and every one of our deeds will receive precisely the same sanction from the blessed Master as did the small gift of the poor widow, it matters not whether we be rich or poor, in a high or low station in life.

4. Not all small things are little, and not all large things are great. But there is a divine, governmental value put on all the affairs of men, and the motive is the stamp that indicates this value of an action. The giv-

ing of a cup of cold water may be of more value than the building of a church or doing many wonderful works. The premium was put on the two mites, although there were some very much larger amounts contributed. Nothing that is really done unto the Lord is little in his sight, and nothing, however large it may be, that is not done unto him is really great. Things are great only as they are truly related to Christ, and they are small only as they ignore and dishonor Christ.

CHAPTER X.

THE NAMELESS IMMORTALS IN GROUP.

"Give me the lowest place,
Not that I dare
Ask for that lowest place.
But thou hast died
That I might live and share
Thy glory by thy side.

"Give me the lowest place;
Or, if for me,
That lowest place too high,
Make one more low
Where I may sit and see
My God, and love thee so."

—C. G. Rossetti.

Artists have painted many ideal groups with Christ as the central figure, representing important scenes in his life among men. Many of these are surpassingly beautiful and impressive—once seen they are never forgotten. They show us Christ in various stages of life, and in many different circumstances. From these scores of life scenes we may select a

gallery that will show us Christ from the manger to the ascension.

We see him as the new-born babe in Bethlehem adored by the wise men of the East who have come in search of the long expected King of the Jews. The wisest sages of the Orient doing homage to the infant child of a very poor and obscure young woman. A strange sort of reverence this must have been.

We see him at the age of twelve years as he is in the temple disputing with the learned doctors of the law concerning the teachings of the Scriptures. At this tender age he expounds the deep doctrines of the divine law with all the dignity and authority of the wisest Rabbi, and even correcting the head masters.

We see him at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee ministering to the wishes of his perplexed mother when they were short of wine. He is here just entering upon his public career, and performs his first miracle. The divine thought instantly changes the water into wine of the best flavor.

We see him surrounded by half a score of children, some of them perched upon his knees gazing into his benign face, while with outstretched hands he gently blesses those around him and says: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Again we see him at the grave of Lazarus in a group of friends and mourners. His own eyes are dim with the tears of sympathy, yet with all the dignity and authority of his divinity he calls forth the dead from the tomb.

Yonder he appears in a group selected from two worlds—the inner circle of the Apostolic college are on one side, and on the other the glorified Moses and Elias, who are sent on some divine mission from the Father in the glory world to the incarnate Son. Looking again we see him in that notable group around the supper table in the upper room where he ate the Passover on that memorable night, and instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and then offered that remarkable intercessory prayer. In another of these celebrated groups we see Christ a little later with the drowsy

three in the garden of Gethsemane, agonizing in sweat and blood, while a bright-winged angel hovers over him, the helping messenger from heaven.

The next scene presents to us "Christ before Pilate," in the mock trial, where falsehood is the only accusing witness, and servility, incarnate in the person of Pontius Pilate, gives him over to the crucifiers who are thirsting for his blood.

We approach next the world picture on Calvary. There we see Christ on the cross surrounded by a group of various caste—thieves and gamblers, and executioners, and centurions, and women, friends and foes. Himself the uplifted Christ, scorned by one dying thief, and worshiped by the other, is a world picture of to-day, some rejecting and others accepting the crucified Christ.

Once more we see him—this time on the Mount of Olives, as he majestically rises from the midst of a group with upturned faces, who eagerly watch him until he is charioted in a cloud and borne away.

What a magnificent gallery these groups compose. What a series of studies in the life of Christ they present. How great the amount of human thought and skill and patience that is represented in their execution. What years of labor have been expended by the celebrated and gifted artists in many centuries and in various countries. What mints of money have been paid for the possession of these rare specimens of art. What multitudes of travelers and pilgrims have stood and gazed in silent awe upon these paintings as if in the presence of the very Christ himself. With bared head the vassal and the king together pay their homage to talent of ages gone by. How many artists have vied with one another in striving to create the ideal Madonna, or to give to the world a perfectly correct head of the blessed Christ. These were the two favorite subjects among the great masters. The Madonnas and the heads of Christ have been created in every conceivable ideal, each artist having his own fancy. And all manner of groupings have been made around the person of Christ.

But no artist has ever painted the group of the "Nameless Immortals"—a group composed of those nameless unknown women of various kinds who appear but once in the life of Christ and pass on. Of all the groups that he collected around himself, this is the most significant. Each figure represents a most wonderful achievement on the part of Christ, and a most remarkable character in itself. What a subject this group presents, by which some master artist will yet render himself immortal. In this group in which Christ is, of course, the central figure, he must be represented as far as possible, in his special relation to each character. And each one of the women has a history, and her own peculiar characteristics, which must as far as possible be represented in the picture. In all the gatherings of human beings there was never a group to equal this. It is unique in every particular.

The characters are exceedingly interesting. They were selected by Christ himself and arranged so as to give the greatest and clearest possible life-lessons to the world in all time

to come. The characters he has selected and the manner of bringing them into this representative group was precisely according to his wise purpose. In his going about among the people he here and there found a character that was representative and that precisely suited his purpose. And he was each time brought into contact with these persons apparently by accident. It would seem that he just happened to be at the gate of the city of Nain at the right moment, or at Jacob's well, or in the treasury in the temple. But these were not accidents any more than was his birth in Bethlehem, or his crucifixion between two thieves. His absence from Bethany at the time when Lazarus died was not accidental, but that the power of God might be made manifest. So his going to dine with a certain critical Pharisee on a certain day was also that the glory of God might be manifest. So just as the selecting of each one in this remarkable group was the center of a divine purpose, so the group itself is the focus where all these purposes meet to form one of

those beautiful constellations that will adorn the Savior's brow, the stars of which were once obscured or lost—jewels gathered from the outcast rubbish of earth and polished and refined by the skilled hand that built the heavens.

In the study of the collecting of these jewels we were enabled to see something of the process of polishing and refining them. While Christ was selecting and educating the College of the Apostles to be the great leaders in the church under his dispensation, and while he was by his teachings explaining and developing the inspired doctrines of his kingdom, he was also quietly selecting this group to illustrate the spirit and power of the Gospel in its application to humanity and to show the nature of its saving effects upon all classes of fallen human beings. It was not only the government and the doctrine of his kingdom that Christ must establish by his work and preaching while in the world, but he must show by actual examples who can be saved, and how it is to be accomplished by human

agencies. The group before us shows some of the actual results of his work, and how he accomplished it. A moment's attention to the group itself will enable us to understand more clearly the design of the divine Artist.

In the center of the group we see the familiar representation of Christ. Around him on every side is a group of women only, to the right and to the left, behind and before we see them, and in various attitudes and postures. That the Son of God should place himself in the midst of such a company is of itself an exceedingly interesting and significant act on his part. His face has the composite expression of love and pity, of firmness and dignity, of earnestness and surprise—in short, of all the soul powers that predominated while he was dealing with the different subjects around him. Now he looks with benign approbation upon the widow humbly offering her hard earned day's wages. Now it is the expression of infinite pity as he approaches the bier and kindly asks the mother not to weep. Again it is anxious surprise as he quickly

turns to see who had touched his garment. And now we see the dignified mien of a judge when he says to the woman, "neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." And so through the whole gamut. Let all these graces be melted into one expression and we have the ideal Christ in this group. His posture has in it all the dignity of the God-man combined with that gentleness that would win the most vicious and degraded. He expresses by his countenance and his posture to each one in the group precisely the manifestation of divine grace that reaches out to her soul for her redemption. And each woman in turn sees in him precisely the divine remedy the state of her soul demands to give it purity and peace.

And the postures of the women express at least to some degree the attitude of soul as they are about to receive the divine blessing. On the extreme right of the group we see standing erect the typical Samaritan woman, with her water bottle in hand. On her face there is an expression of mingled shame

and surprise, as she now feels the searching eye of Christ gazing on her, and hears him read her inmost character. She suddenly and unexpectedly receives the light. She finds the treasure before it is even sought. The light surprises her, and the revelation of her guilt by a stranger adds astonishment and shame. She is one of the most prominent and interesting figures in the group, and worthy of careful notice. On the left of the Samaritan and a little rearward stands one clad in mourning, with her head bowed and weeping in the bitterness of grief. The last ray of hope has vanished and deep despair is depicted in every feature of her sad yet beautiful face. Her dress distinctly indicates that she has been for a time bereft of her husband, and to this is added the garments of fresh and deeper mourning. She cannot even so much as lift up her eyes to look on Christ; but in trembling anxiety waits. She is a perfect type of woman in the extremity of bereavement and trial.

On the extreme left we see in widow's garb, and with marks of utmost poverty, an earnest

faced woman, devoutly bowing her head, and extending her hand. Between the thumb and finger are two small pieces of money just in the act of slipping out. Her entire appearance is that of a busy, laboring woman, scarcely earning enough each day to meet the absolute necessaries of life. Looking at her she strikes us as one who does not care to be observed in what she is about to do, but prefers to pass on unnoticed. To her right and farther back in kneeling posture, with an intensely earnest upturned face and pleading eyes, is another widow. She is pitifully pleading for some favor, not from Christ, but from some unseen person. Her expression would indicate that what she asks is of the utmost importance, and that there is a determination not to yield, not to depart until the request be granted.

Behind Christ and rightward, is a woman in a forward leaning posture, with her arm extended at full length forward and downward, and her finger reaching almost in touch with the hem of his garment. Only one thought is

expressed in her countenance—"May I but touch the hem of his garment." Apparently her whole soul is concentrated in the tip of her finger. Her attitude indicates the utmost tension to accomplish her purpose.

Behind leftward is an advancing figure. It is that of a woman bowed down, with long flowing hair, half concealing her face. She is weeping and the tears are streaming profusely from her eyes. She is apparently stooping lower and lower as she advances. Her tread is very light and her approach silent. In her right hand she carries a small box of ointment. Her whole mien indicates that she does not want to be observed. Before the central figure and to the right, we see one dressed in foreign garb, with her face bowed to the ground in a worshiping posture. Her attitude is that of extreme humility and submission, while her half concealed face has an expression of determination and will power that means conquest. She is the very incarnation of determination and perseverance.

Before and leftward is the figure of a piti-

fully deformed crooked woman. Her body is bent and stiff with chronic affliction. Her face, prematurely aged and with many marks of extreme acute suffering, is upturned with a smile and beams of hope playing over it, as if suddenly aroused by some cheerful voice from a long state of hopeless despondency. Her expression is that of very earnest, hopeful expectation, as if she were instantly to be rejuvenated and straightened to beautiful womanhood. In the front center and a little farther removed, stands a figure with bowed head, and face covered with shame and fear. Her garb and general appearance are not to her credit, and indicate that she has been ruthlessly forced into her present position. Her face is the very confession of guilt and basest sin, while she has much the appearance of one who is about to hear the severest sentence of the law, and to be instantly executed. Such is a brief sketch of this remarkable group. Words are, however, inadequate to express the full significance of these characters. Nor could the brush of the most skilled art-

ist do more than give a faint idea of the persons represented here, each one of which is the personification of great truths and principles in humanity, in Christ and in redemption. Here we see represented the world in its approach to Christ, and Christ in his approach to humanity in all of its depravity and suffering.

And could we impart life to this group and watch for a little while the dealings of Christ with each one of these characters, we should see in a panorama every phase of actual redemption wrought by Christ upon those with whom he came in contact, and should see in this as a world picture just what Christ has done and is constantly doing for the world which he came to redeem. Looking again at this group from another point of view we see other interesting and important facts that add to the significance of the picture as regards both Christ and humanity. It will be seen that two of the group are foreigners—those for whom Christ did not come to bring blessings primarily. And one of these foreigners

is a despised Samaritan. The Jews and the Samaritans had absolutely no dealings with one another. The hatred seems to have been on both sides alike, and had been so for centuries past. So we would scarcely expect that they would receive any of the immediate blessings of Christ's advent. Yet we see one in this select group. And she is not only a Samaritan, but she is one in whom there was absolutely nothing to give any claim to such a place. The other foreigner is rather a unique character as to her nationality. She is a woman of Canaan, a Greek by birth, and a Syro-Phoenecian by nationality. We can very readily see in her a type—a representation of the Gentile world in general. In the Samaritan woman we have represented the semi-heathen, while in the Greek Canaanite there is the pure Gentile type, and both together show us the whole of mankind, save the Jews only. We see also while Christ is seeking the one—the Samaritan—the other is most earnestly seeking Christ. He came to remove national enmities and differences and to be

sought after by all peoples. He is indeed the light of the world and the desire of all nations.

In this little group of nine women we notice at least three widows, possibly four. And the record indicates that they are all extremely poor. One is at the collection box as the model giver. Another is at the feet of the unjust judge, the model of importunate prayer, The other is at the gate the model of bereavement and grief. These widows show us at once the poorest and most bereft and most dependent of all human beings. And they show us Christ's mission to all such. Truly he came to enrich the poor, to relieve the oppressed, and to bind up the broken-hearted. He is indeed a Husband unto the Widow and a Father to the orphan. How large a part of the human race are represented by these three widows. Take out all the poor, and all the oppressed, and all the bereft and broken-hearted and how few will be left! What a boon to humanity that Christ came to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and praise for sadness. Two of this group

are suffering with chronic bodily afflictions for which there was no human remedy, but both are instantly healed when brought into contact with him. It is worthy of special note that one of these was healed by the laying on of Christ's own hand—his touch, while the other was healed by her own touch. Christ sought the one and called her to him and blessed her. It was the act of his own will. The other sought Christ and touched him and obtained the blessing even before she knew it. It was the action of her will in the case. Here we see again the two great elements in humanity—some must be sought after and saved as it were per force, while others are seeking the blessing for themselves as soon as they know where to obtain it, but both are equally incurable by human power. What an apt illustration this of the hid treasure and the pearl of great price referred to in the parables of our Lord explaining the kingdom of God as found by different persons. Thus we see Christ's work continually illustrating and confirming his teaching, especially his para-

bles. Once more we see in this group three women of noted sinful character—they are sinners in the most significant sense. One is living in adultery with a man supposed to be her husband. She was no doubt a noted character from the fact that she had had five husbands, all or none of whom might be still living, but now she has one who is not her husband. She was discovered in her sin and convicted before she was aware of it. Another of these three came to Christ of her own accord in the most humble and penitent manner. She had seen her own sinfulness and was disgusted with the sight of herself, and coming to Christ expressed her reformation in a most unmistakable way. She it was that washed the Savior's feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and repeatedly kissed them. The third, and possibly the worst of all, was brought to Christ by a wicked hypocritical mob who were eager to stone her upon the slightest pretext. Of her guilt there was no possible doubt. It was both heinous and aggravated. How Christ dealt with these

has already been seen. The first is sin concealed. The second is sin confessed. The third is sin exposed by man. But in each case we see the amazing skill and wisdom of Christ. And the whole furnishes a remarkable illustration of how he deals with all sinners. It shows in action what he expressed in words when he said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world," and, "though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

THE END.

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